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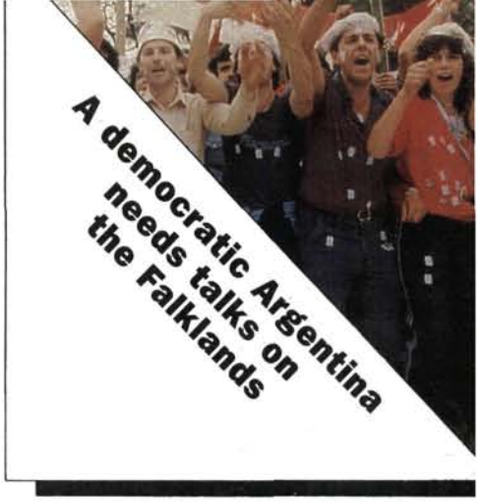
- The complete tactical voter
- Crisis in the blocs
- Kellner on the left
- What's on le télé
- Maureen Duffy interviewed
- Camden jazz



A democratic Argentina needs talks on the Falklands

# The women of the SDP – decent, caring & NICE

Cover illustration: Chris Duggan

'What touches me most is the sheer bloody awfulness of women's lives'

**Polly Toynbee**

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NEW STATESMAN

Vol 113 No 2925 17 April 1987

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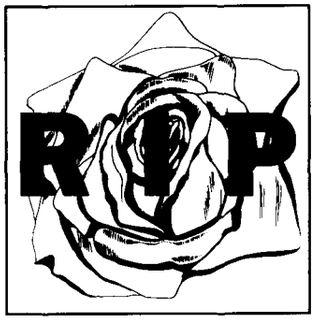
## NEXT WEEK

SECRET SOCIETY

We start the first of Duncan Campbell's *Secret Society* series with a report on the misuse of confidential databanks and the increasing ease with which others can learn the details of our lives

# Death by column inches




THE MEDIA agendas for the coming election are now being set. These are rather different from when, where and how to put the cameras in the key marginals' town halls. It is more a matter of the underlying themes which will nevertheless provide the basis for the questions asked in interviews, for the special features commissioned, for the assumptions of the analyses.

Now being programmed in to these agendas is the question: is this the death of the Labour Party and/or socialism? That vista was opened up by the Prime Minister in her interview with the *Financial Times* towards the end of last year: it has been seized on by writers of all persuasions — especially by those of the right, who see the answer to one or both of the questions as self-evidently yes. It has got so far as to be common wisdom on the right and centre of politics to assume that at least socialism, in any meaningful definition, is practically dead in Britain (and perhaps everywhere else in the West); and that Labour is a dying hulk, whose end may be slow because of the inertia associated with the passing of once-great institutions, but is nevertheless inevitable.

Brian Walden's weekly column in the *Sunday Times* has been particularly devoted to this theme. Walden was one of the best performers of his day in politics and then on television: he retains the right instincts of the working-class Brummie he is — anti-toff, suspicious of Big Brother in his myriad disguises, alert to condescension. But he has transmuted this into a dominant thesis that at times reaches the status of an obsession: that socialism is a raging disease and must be wholly extirpated before the country can be returned to health.

His column last Sunday was the distillation of many. 'The death agony of socialist Utopianism' he wrote, 'will be messy and is already casting a long shadow before it. Few of us have lived in a society which did not have to think what a future socialist government might do. A pall of uncertainty is going to be removed from the social and economic life of Britain.'

The key flaw in arguments like this is that it assumes socialism as an unchangeable given, and thus can caricature it as a rock being covered up by a tide sweeping past it. In fact, the changes which he and other commentators describe are happening within the labour movement, as in every other part of society: the agonies he mistakes for death throes are those of a normally conservative institution having to come to grips with them.

The major one of these is the decline of Labour's base in the unions. That has not just made it more difficult to advance a viable politics which depends on strong corporations of labour and capital: it also means that organised labour can no longer claim the hegemony over society it once could. It is now another pressure group, albeit a huge one: and because it is seen to be so, it both disorients a party which has relied on it more heavily than any other party of the left elsewhere in the world, and encourages other groups to challenge for a place in the sun. That is part of the explanation for the current salience of the black sections issue (see Peter Kellner, p.7): if the organised working class no longer incorporates the interests of ethnic minorities, then they see themselves as having to stand up for their own.

These agonies have had well-known effects, of which the split in the Labour Party in 1980 is still the most marked. They have not, however, cancelled out the space which a party of the left can and should occupy: a space in which high welfare spending, planned investments and policies aimed at promoting a greater degree of equality can again command a majority.

That this approach throws up a thousand problems is not in dispute. How does a party of the left convince a majority who have done well enough to hold back while an impoverished and partly submerged minority are rescued — the central dilemma which the Thatcher government has bequeathed to succeeding ones? How does it convince a cynical and short-winded financial sector that its plans are in the best interests of the country? How does it restore a sense of community in a country where the fragmentation of society now takes an increasingly violent aspect? How does it deal with an ultra-left which dominates large numbers of its constituency parties, and which shows little interest in developing an electable politics of the left?

Some of these dilemmas are old, some new, some old with a new twist. Their satisfactory resolution will determine the shape of future left politics, as well as determining the likelihood of a government of the left within the short term: but there is nothing written in stone which says that there *will* be a satisfactory resolution in the immediate future.

But that does not add up to the death of socialism, or the death of the Labour Party — any more than the adoption of the socialist reforms of 1945-51 added up to the death of the Conservative Party. It will be difficult to keep these spurious questions off the media agendas in the coming months — for all the vigour with which they are argued and believed. The reports of death are not just exaggerated they are flat wrong. □



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## DIARY

*Scarborough*

Some of the country's top romantic fiction writers gathered in Scarborough last weekend to discuss the Aids crisis. It now threatens the very basis of their craft. Romantic fiction, especially the mainline stuff put out by the house of Mills and Boon, has heroes with a sexual history and heroines with none: that is a law almost as iron as a happy ending. 'Women', says Anne Thomas, an M and B star, 'like men who know what they're doing in bed'. But Aids cuts the roué's premium like the slice of the castrator's scalpel: better — women might reasonably be supposed to be demanding of their escapism — a fumbler than a transmitter.

Jean Saunders, who led the talks on the looming crisis, says that the figure of the newly-defrocked priest may become a key stereotype for her and her fellow practitioners. Saunders writes steamy fiction under the name of Rowena Summers and quite steamy fiction under her own name. I say that there are clear practical limits to the availability of such characters for writers as prolific as these (Thomas cracks out some four a year, at least) and suggest the figure of the 16-year old emerging shyly from adolescence under the tutelage of an older woman. But this breaks another iron law: that the man is always older than the woman. 'Toyboys!' snorts Mary Wibberley with contempt. That just about sees it off. Wibberley is an M and B superstar, a woman of fabled output and wealth. Many of the women at Scarborough last weekend wanted to *be* her and most deferred to her. So it seems the bodice-rippers will give way to the cassock-shedders. 'This thing is bigger than both of us, father.'

○

The reasons for these women gathering was not, in fact, Aids, but Stanley Wilson. Wilson, a jovial jobbing writer who lives outside Scarborough, began these writers' weekends some 14 years ago: he hires the Delmont Hotel — owned by Erik Lahteela, who uniquely escaped from a Finnish concentration camp during the war where he'd been imprisoned for his anti-Nazism — and carves the weekend up into seminars, games, meals, speeches and parties. The 120-odd participants are about 80 per cent women: most are professionals; some do well out of their trade; some — like Mary Wibberley — do very well. They come together less for the content of the weekend than for the camaraderie, a break from the isolations of the word processor and the deadline. They're sharp, satirical and frank: their conversation immediately and dizzyingly personal — puzzlingly so, until it becomes clear that they were after *material*. Anyone doing four books a year needs to store repertoires of gestures, intonations, phrases, postures, habits and traits and thus must use these infrequent forays into the world to the hilt.

○

The guest speakers at the event, apart from me, were Beryl Bainbridge, Hammond Innes and Olwyn Wymark. Innes had spoken on Friday evening and gone soon after: his audience, whose writing was much closer at least in intention to his than that of their other guests, found him condescending and tedious. Bainbridge and Wymark, entering into the spirit of a boozy, leg-pulling and funny weekend, went down a treat.

○

I got sexually harassed. Not in any physical way, officer, but more in being made the butt of sustained sexual teasing. Women in groups with men in the minority are as prone to that as men, in my experience, and usually rougher: but that may merely be the view of the butt rather than the protagonist or the observer. As the formal agenda ran out on Saturday evening, bedroom parties sprang into brilliant life, the cosier for a wall of wind which came full at the Delmont from the North Sea. The most hilarious party I found was Goldie Hargreaves'. She's a Yorkshirewoman in her '60s, a writer and occasional broadcaster, with that infinitely precious knack of being able to turn her whole life into a vast, inclusive joke. Her tale of how she organised a short story competition for *She* magazine, only to find the unanimously chosen winner had plagiarised a Roald Dahl short story (un-spotted by six distinguished judges), deserves to be recorded and released. Her party went on until after three: it was not until the end of it that I realised she was almost wholly blind.

○

Aileen Armitage is also nearly blind: she writes her bestsellers (the 'Hawksmoor' series, *Dark Moon Raging, Touchstone*) by using a video scanning device which projects her keystrokes, or the pages of her research material, in giant letters on a screen. Wholly blind for two years, she had an operation which restored minimal sight in one eye which she prays she'll maintain.

Like most of her colleagues, she was a fascinating talker with no small talk. She more or less began conversation by observing that men were more honest in their confessions of their fantasies, sexual and otherwise, than women: this was an empirical observation from research for her books. She did not know why this was so: it was enough for her that it was so.

She won the 'stitchwords' competition. Stitchwords, an invention of Wilson's, are words welded together, then given a new definition: 'Candelabrador — a three legged dog', for example. Others of her winning selection: 'Pompisity — the royal wee'; 'Cowpatricide' — murder by foul means'; 'keybordello — screwing it up on the typewriter'; 'Mannequinnock — highly fashionable leader'.

○

Most of the other women were working-class or lower middle-class by birth; it makes them sensitive to the put-down, the pulling of the rank of class or education which they rightly suspect all about them. Those of them who had done well for themselves through their writing had become politically conservative: in one of those contemporary reversals which I find both common and comprehensible, they see the left as at least potentially exclusive, snobby and elitist, threatening to the self-respect they had achieved — as well, of course, as to the money they had earned and appeared to be enjoying hugely.

They were not feminists in any public sense but they were not anti-feminist either. The more successful, most of whom had had children and wrote as they brought them up — between 10.00 p.m. and 3.00 a.m. was a common time to many — were now the main breadwinners. It had not, in some cases, helped their marriages, but they would not have thought of giving up their craft for that. It was the work which gave them their sense of self as well as their income. In that they are no different from men.

But can they talk of Mills and Boon novels creating an urge in them which forced them awake into the early hours, and was a valuable enough flame to nurse through the domestic crises it caused? It seems so. Anne Thomas sees her genre as clear-sightedly as any sniffy London critic: but also claims for it some status, as the difficult art of dreaming then writing dreams for others which all concerned *know* to be dreams, yet continue to consume. The handsome, slightly mysterious men; the attractive virginal women; the inevitability of the resolution of the difficulties they encounter and the triumph of romantic love are of course an artistic straitjacket: but so were the sonnet and the classical symphony. Difficult not to feel, on a blustery Scarborough weekend in freezing spring, that as much feeling was pouring into the one as had into the others.

**John Lloyd**

## ROGER WODDIS

### Nice one, Keith

*Mr Keith Best, Conservative MP for Ynys Mon, who is stepping down at the next election 'to uphold the high standards of those in public life', will receive £9,250 in severance pay*

The world begins at Ynys Mon,
The Best things belong to me;
My shares in British Telecom
Are just what they ought to be.
The gains that they bring
Turn winter to spring,
And more will be mine
When I resign.
Although the worst hits everyone,
The Best things belong to me.

The shares I bought in British Gas
And also in TSB
Extend the wealth we must amass
To keep Britain strong and free.
And if, when I'm copped,
You hear me adopt
A high moral tone,
I'm not alone.
It hardly matters whom you foul,
As long as the ref. can't see.



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# Good for Derry

SUNDAY afternoons in Derry are different these days. For the past 18 months Derry City Football Club's Brandywell ground has been the hub of a revival of soccer in the City — and a cornerstone of community hope. There is now an alternative to hanging around street corners, passing the time on a Sunday afternoon.

A football club has existed in Derry since 1929, playing in the Northern Irish Senior League. In 1971, at the height of civil unrest, a coach bringing the players of Ballymena United was hijacked and burnt. For a while the Club played on, using other grounds for their 'home games', but finally gave up a year later.

Periodically, the Club would apply for re-admission to the NI League: in spite of an improving security situation, permission was refused. Denied re-admission to the NI League on security grounds, the club applied in 1984 to the League of Ireland (in the Republic). In the 1985/86 season the Club played in the Republic's First Division, in front of average crowds of over 10,000. It did well: earlier this month the City Council held a civic reception in the Guildhall to celebrate Derry's promotion into the Republic's Premier Division next season.

The Football Trust, the body established by the pools companies to aid the game, has put £100,000 towards ground improvements — in spite of Democratic Unionist complaints that the funds would benefit only Catholics. The view that football is good for Derry has been echoed by most observers. The Brandywell ground is in the heart of Catholic Bogside, overlooked by the Catholic Creggan estate and the city's cemetery: but home games are attracting more and more spectators from the Waterside Protestant area. The Club's management committee is mixed and it promotes non-sectarian attendance: the Protestant Bishop of Derry showed his support by attending a match, a particularly significant action on a Sunday.

The RUC keep well away: but in spite of crowds larger than some English First Division clubs, hooliganism is out. Ironically, if the team continue their successful results next season then Derry City could be playing in European competitions while English clubs remain banned — for hooliganism.

**Kate Hoey**

# The health divide

SINCE THE Black Report on class inequalities in health, doubts have been raised about the validity of official statistics showing widening difference in death rates between social classes — particularly by John Rentoul, writing in the *NS* of 3 April. But it is not just the trend during the Thatcher years of rising unemployment and poverty which is at issue. The gap seems to have widened during the entire post-war period.

Much hangs on this debate, because health is probably the best indicator we have of changes in the subjective quality of life. Income figures are blind to qualitative changes in the standard of living, to the material and psychosocial implications of living in tower blocks, and to the modernisation of poverty.

Four reasons have been given for doubting the widening health gap. First, comparisons between the deaths rates of classes are hampered by the changing proportion of the population they contain. This problem has now been resolved in three studies using three different methods of measuring inequalities across all classes (rather than just between extremes), each weighted according to its share of population. All three studies show a widening health gap.

Second is the effect of revisions to the social class classification of occupations. By confining the analysis to occupations which can be defined consistently through the period, research has now shown that variations in classification make little or no contribution to the widening gap.

Third, it has been suggested that health inequalities might not result from social and economic inequalities themselves, but from a social-Darwinist tendency for the healthy to move up the social ladder and the unhealthly to move down. Three large cohort studies have been used to examine this possibility at different periods in life. While there is undoubtedly a tendency for social mobility to discriminate against the unhealthy, attempts to quantify the size of this effect have, in each case, suggested that it contributes only a small part to the overall picture. Nor is there any suggestion that the contribution to the gap from this source has increased.

Fourth, it has been claimed more recently that the proportion of deaths covered by class comparisons is becoming too small to draw safe conclusions. But the official date covers not only deaths among all occupied and unemployed men, but also their wives and the infant mortality among their children. No one suggested reasons for thinking that the growing proportion of deaths among the elderly may have been mysteriously insulated from the widening inequalities found in the same causes of death among slightly younger people. Indeed, such data as is available for deaths

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— **Hugo Young**
*Guardian* 5 March 1987

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after retirement also shows a widening class gap and it is often possible to follow the changes in the class distribution of a disease as it works its way through successive age groups.

Altogether the work that has been done on class and health shows that the picture of growing inequalities is remarkably robust. Despite what once seemed legitimate reasons for scepticism, it turns out that it is *not* a matter of how you look at the figures.

Attempts have, however, been made to infer the trends in class differences in health without actually using any class or socioeconomic data. Julian Le Grand, quoted by John Rentoul, measured inequalities in individuals' age of death regardless of social position. Where some die young and others old, we have inequality whatever the class. Because death rates have declined very much faster in earlier than in later life, so giving us all a better chance of living to old age, Le Grand found growing equality. But this is simply a reflection of the familiar shift from infections, maternal mortality and other causes which killed the young, towards the modern predominance of degenerative diseases occurring in later life.

Unfortunately, a measure of health equality which disregards social position misses the point: whether health has become more sensitive to modern social and economic inequalities; and why it is that improvements in the health of the poor have failed to keep up with the improvements enjoyed by the better off. These questions demand urgent attention from socialists.

**Richard Wilkinson**

*Richard Wilkinson is at the Centre for Medical Research, Sussex University.*

## If the caption fits

*No 13*

'It's a note from the *New Statesman*, Mr Best, sir. They want you to appear in their caption competition. It says entries have to be in by Tuesday 28 April to win a £10 book token in the issue of 1 May.' Thanks to the *Guardian*'s Stephen Cook for his exclusive revelation of the book *A Day With an MP*, from which this picture of multiple share applicant Keith Best (also known as . . .) is taken. Go to it, and watch the libel laws.

*No 11: winner*

Mrs T: 'Hush — is that the sound of socialism dying?' M Mitterrand: 'That woman's got a bee in her bonnet.' *(Tracey Dick, London N4.)* Hon.mensh: Francois: 'Sacre bleu! I can see straight through from one ear to the other.' *(Steve Horton, London N10.)*

## Czech maze

*Prague*

INSPIRED by an outrageous claim in the West German *Bildzeitung*, almost 300 journalists locked in Prague for three days with little to do got rather carried away. Mr Gorbachev, according to *Bild*, was annoyed with the Czech communist party because they would not let him visit Alexander Dubcek. The hysteria grew and it was even suggested that he was demanding a complete rehabilitation of the 1968 reform government.

Gorbachev *did* succeed in embarrassing the Czechoslovak communist party (CPCZ) — but in a fashion which corresponds much more closely to his sophisticated political mind than the nonsense which some of the less diligent Western observers were offering as copy. The most telling image of the visit was during the walkabout in the capital. With effortless magnetism he breezed through the throng on Prague's Na Prikope, chatting, shaking hands and laughing. Behind him tottered a pathetic Gustav Husak, whose frightened, lost look would have provoked momentary sympathy in the most embittered exile.

Gorbachev may be irritated by the lethargy of the present leadership in Czechoslovakia, but it does not follow that he wishes to encourage a sudden political upheaval there. 'Mr Gorbachev has enough problems of his own at home,' said a former member of the CPCZ's central committee. 'He will not go stirring things up here, but this does not mean that he will be without influence'.

Moscow does look set to get tough on its economic relations with Prague. In his major speech last Friday, Gorbachev once again stressed the need for a qualitative improvement in Czechoslovak exports to the Soviet Union, in both the heavy engineering and the consumer spheres. But as Charter 77 signatory Petr Uhl pointed out, 'that does not mean his demanding a concomitant political liberalisation'.

Even if Mr Gorbachev is insisting on change in Czechoslovakia, he probably will not have to work very hard to achieve it. So confused is the leadership there that he only has to blow a little and it will topple under the weight of its own contradictions.

**Misha Glenny**

**NEWSTATESPERSON**

## Hurt Hatt

PARLIAMENTARY brickbrats are one thing, plates hurled across a restaurant like frisbies another. Roy Hattersley got a rough foretaste of how tax cuts would go down in some sections of the community at the weekend — though it was his constituency chairman, Sir Stanley Yapp, who took the brunt of one on his head.

It was a bad week for the Hatt, who had come under attack of a quite different kind from the militants of the black sections movement — a movement he has bitterly resisted, and which has set its sights on his Sparkbrook constituency where two black members have been suspended, and where there is a large Asian membership. Labour's deputy leader and shadow chancellor thus approaches an election campaign shaken and angered, made graphically aware that he features in the demonology of both left and right.

That is particularly bitter for a man whose political life has had as its theme a relatively libertarian version of British labourism, and who has made it clear both by his style and by his apparently effortless output of high-quality journalism that he does not wish to flatter the proletariat by imitating them, and that he holds many aspects of civil society in at least as high regard as he does those of politics. In his writing — most recently in his *Choose Freedom*, out earlier this year — he has extended a vision of society seeking a greater sense of wholeness through greater egalitarianism and a whittling away of privilege — the whole taking place within a market economy and with a very large degree of consensus.

The attacks from the black sections, and the physical attack in Birmingham's Holiday Inn, have this one thing in common: they are reactions from those who believe they will suffer under the kind of society Hattersley is proposing. The group of Tottenham supporters, one of whose members threw the plate which struck Sir Stanley, had earlier been chanting 'Tax cuts' in the direction of the Hattersley party, and had booked into the hotel for lunch under the name of 'Bankers and brokers'.

The belief of black section activists is that Hattersley represents an approach to race which stresses integrationism over separatism, and which therefore cuts directly against the view adopted by the sections that only through virtually autonomous organisations can black interests be advanced. They are right that the Hattersley philosophy does strain at the kind of separatism they propose, and that the man himself sees such manifestations as dangerous to a 'Labour family' which can include ethnic minorities and can ease their passage into British society.

His ability to bounce back is thought of as one of the few sure things in an uncertain political world. But both his vision and his temperament are taking hard knocks now. A society where even those groups who should be on 'his side' regard him as an enemy is a cause of deep concern: a future where he cannot exercise the power of office he loves and has striven for is unattractive. These are dark thoughts and times for a man who could yet do good, for himself and others. ●



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**PETER KELLNER**

# David Blunkett is right about Sharon Atkin

TONY BENN, who is far better than most on Labour's far left at making his points with a sense of humour, once insisted that there should be 'no annihilation without representation'. He was referring to the risk that Britain would be obliterated by a war between the United States and the Soviet Union. His argument was — is — that we should not be destroyed in a war that had nothing to do with us.

A similar, if less apocalyptic, point could be made about the Labour Party. I argued in this space four weeks ago that the margin between triumph and disaster at the next election would be a narrow one, and that disaster could lead to extinction. If that were to be the result of policies and strategies freely adopted by ordinary members and levy-paying trade unionists, so be it. That is not, however, the case. The threat to Labour comes not from the actions of the many but the decisions of the few.

Had Greenwich's General Committee chosen Glenys Thornton rather than Deidre Wood — the Kinnock loyalist rather than the hard left ex-GLC councillor — Labour would almost certainly have held the seat. There would have been no Alliance surge in the polls, and Labour would never have slipped to 30 per cent in the polls. The Greenwich GC has much to answer for.

So have Sharon Atkin and Linda Bellos. My guess is that they are not in the pay of Conservative Central Office, although the services they have performed for the Tories are as great as if they were. Only the latest of their propaganda gifts to Norman Tebbit was their appearance at a 'black sections' meeting in Birmingham last week on the very day that Neil Kinnock and Jo Richardson launched Labour's policy on women. The predictable impact of the Bellos/Atkin meeting was to destroy the favourable publicity that the women's policy should have achieved.

Since then there have been reports, most notably in the *Guardian* and the *Observer*, that 'senior party figures' want Atkin and Bellos expelled. As far as I can tell these reports did not emanate either from Mr Kinnock's office or Walworth Road. Senior party officials believe that their source is David Blunkett. Mr Blunkett was certainly very cross about the 'black sections' meeting, and thinks the two women should be disciplined and possibly expelled.

COULD THEY be expelled? Some commentators, reading out-of-date party rulebooks, believe it is difficult to expel them without first proving that they belong to organisations with their own separate programme.

Not so. The rules were changed last autumn. Clause III, subsection 4 now states: 'No member of the Labour Party shall be engaged in a sustained course of conduct prejudicial to the Party'. No longer is there any need to pursue the kind of narrow organisational point which caused so much trouble in expelling the leaders of the Revolutionary Socialist League (aka 'Militant').

Of the two women, time is more pressing in the case of Ms Atkin. She is Labour's candidate in Nottingham East, where the Conservative majority is 1,464. If she fights the constituency for Labour, then two consequences are likely to ensue. First, Labour will not win the seat. Second, Ms Atkin's remarks are likely to receive widespread coverage in the anti-Labour press. Mr Kinnock will be pestered with questions about whether he disowns her or not. Labour's chances of fighting the election on its own terms will be gravely diminished.

If Ms Atkin is persuaded or forced to stand down, or expelled from the Party, Nottingham East might still be lost. But at least the cancer will be contained to the one constituency.

What, then, is the evidence that Ms Atkin has engaged 'in a sustained course of conduct prejudicial to the Party'? Here is some. As a Lambeth councillor she was one of the most vocal in supporting the borough's policy of setting an illegal rate. She was one of the councillors disqualified by the courts in April last year. The effect of the surcharge she faced was softened by the fact that her husband, Edward Atkin, earned £28,000 a year as Lambeth's director of housing. Sadly for the Atkin household, Mr Atkin left his post last June, 'by mutual agreement', after just eight months in the post.

> ***'The threat to Labour comes not from the actions of the many but the decisions of the few'***

So Ms Atkin's record in local government puts her out on a limb. If that were all, she could be tolerated as just another 'London loony'. But it is not all. In attempting to break into national politics she has behaved consistently badly. In September 1985, during Labour's annual conference at Bournemouth, she described Roy Hattersley as a 'bankrupt right-wing politician'.

She was just warming up. At the *Labour Herald* rally, she said of Mr Kinnock: 'perhaps it's better he goes; that man is a class traitor'. Six months later, when she was selected as candidate for Nottingham East, she described the decision as 'a slap in the mouth for Neil Kinnock'.

On 'black sections', Ms Atkin has consistently refused to accept the verdict of successive Labour conferences (something the left more normally accuses the right of doing). Last autumn at Blackpool a resolution calling for their formal establishment 'with the same constitutional rights as the Women's Section and the Young Socialists' was defeated by 5,205,000 votes to 1,222,000.

Ms Atkin has continued to defy that ruling. Last week's meeting in Birmingham was a deliberate act of defiance. During her speech Ms Atkin made her cavalier attitude clear: 'I don't want a Parliamentary seat if I can't represent black people. If I'm not a candidate at the next election I don't give a damn . . . I want to fight with black people, for black people and myself and all of my kind. I don't give a damn about Neil Kinnock and the racist Labour Party'.

THAT IS THE sort of talk one expects to hear more from the Workers' Revolutionary Party than from an officially endorsed Labour candidate. It does not even bear any sensible relation to what is known about the attitudes of black voters. A Harris Poll in late 1984, when an earlier spate of 'black sections' arguments were at their height, found that 60 per cent of black Londoners disapproved of racially separate sections within parties. Only 16 per cent approved. The poll, for LWT's *Black on Black*, found that such sections were more likely to deter potential supporters of the Labour Party than attract them.

Although it is easier than it used to be to expel people who are harming the Labour Party, it is, quite properly, not that easy. The national executive would have to refer the matter to the newly-formed National Constitutional Committee, which then has to follow its own strict guidelines. It would take weeks — certainly past a June general election.

Some party officials, seeing these problems, are exploring an alternative course of action: removing Ms Atkin's endorsement as a Labour candidate and either forcing Nottingham East to choose a new one or imposing one.

I doubt whether this would work. Clause X of Labour's constitution gives the national executive the power not to endorse a parliamentary candidate. It also makes it clear that a Labour MP who 'fails to accept or act in harmony with the standing orders of the Parliamentary Labour Party' is liable to expulsion. The constitution makes no specific provision for dealing with candidates who behave badly *after* they have been endorsed but *before* they are elected to Parliament. One view at Walworth Road is that if the NEC has the power to endorse a candidate, it logically has the power to 'dis-endorse' a candidate. I fear that if this idea were pursued the only beneficiaries would be the lawyers.

The only people who can stop Ms Atkin standing are the members of Nottingham East's general committee. Many of them are unhappy with Ms Atkin's performance as a candidate. They feel she comes to Nottingham too infrequently. However, as one insider puts it, if Ms Atkin stands down, or is stood down, 'they would only choose another headbanger'.

Whichever route the leadership chooses, it must make clear that Ms Atkin will not be welcome among the ranks of Labour MPs at Westminster. Perhaps the biggest burden will fall on Labour's other black candidates. They have supported black sections in the past, but this week they have issued a statement supporting Mr Kinnock and implicitly criticising Ms Atkin. If the NEC decides to go further, they will face their hardest test of loyalty yet. □



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# Women for a classless meritocracy

**SARAH BENTON** *reports on the women of the SDP and finds them with a greater power in their party than they could have hoped for in any other*

'LADIES AND I'm happy to say gentlemen as well, as that is very much the flavour of Women for Social Democracy . . .' Celia Goodhart, chairwoman of Women for Social Democracy, majestic in golden yellow silk with black dots, welcomes her guests for the evening. She has the grand bearing of one of the old upper-class suffragists, a wholly appropriate hostess for this 1 April reception — in honour of Rosie Barnes, the only woman SDP MP and, as David Owen points out proudly, 'the first SDP MP ever not to have defected from another organisation'.

The gentlemen whom Mrs Goodhart has been so pleased to welcome number no more than half a dozen, of whom one is Mr Goodhart and two more are the lads backstage. But it's the principle that counts and a very SDPish one too; a public espousal of feminism without being, as they would see it, dogmatic or sectarian.

Women in the SDP are not like women in other political parties. They speak of their chosen organisation with a warm and gushing enthusiasm which is quite at odds with the wry and cynical tones heard so often among not only Labour and Conservative women but Liberal women too. If the Alliance woman is taking up more space centre stage than women in political parties usually do (and they usually don't) that is largely because she has been thrust there by the distinctive new SDP woman.

Take Polly Toynbee; or perhaps take Rosie Barnes, or Sue Slipman or Julia Neuberger or even, though rather less so, Anne Sofer, Shirley Williams or Celia Goodhart from the older generation. They are all, unlike Labour loyalists, openly ambitious, fierce in their belief in individual success and their rejection of the constraints of collective action. And they are successful. Sue Slipman was the first woman to become President of the National Union of Students, Julia Neuburger one of the very few women to become a rabbi. Polly Toynbee is the first woman to be named 'Columnist of the Year' in the British Press Awards — an acknowledgement that a very womanly style of commentary can be a proper political journalism. Slipman and Sofer are both parliamentary candidates, as is Celia Goodhart.

As indeed are, at the latest count, 58 women altogether, giving the Alliance 87 women parliamentary candidates, a fact of which the SDP women are inordinately proud. At 19 per cent of the SDP's selections so far, it may be a measly proportion compared with the SDP's general view that public bodies should comprise equal numbers of men and women; but given the Alliance edge over Labour (just, at 86) and Conservative (hugely at 33) — and given that they have had so much more time to get it right — the SDP's production of female politicians is seen as a living testament that they have both broken the mould and, in their constitutional arrangements, created the right *new* mould.

Camera Press

Camera Press

Rex Features

**Rosie by name, rosy by nature. The victor of Greenwich, standing for common sense and success, with Sue Slipman (top) and Julia Neuberger**

## Pleasantly select

So far it seems to be attracting a working sufficiency of women; 40 per cent of the 58,000 members as opposed to the third of several hundred thousand members claimed by Labour and Conservative. Most of the members, SDP people keep saying with an insistence that can sound over-anxious, were never in any political party. Thus untouched by the limits of tradition and prejudice, the 'political virgins' are well placed to devise a distinct political character for the SDP. As more women than men are 'political virgins', then that potentially puts them in a



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leading role. Might they with so much of their lives spent outside the runnels of class relations, reject class altogether as the basis of political alignment and policies and come up with something completely different? Something that would grant the SDP the distinct classless identity which its spokespersons are so anxious to acquire?

In fact, the leading women of the SDP, active both in Women for Social Democracy and in the party's national and policy committees, both come from definite political backgrounds and are clearly within the professional middle class. For however much the SDP gropes for a class-free politics, its members nonetheless find it reassuring that they have in the professional middle class a solidifying class basis of their own; small but pleasantly select.

The political background from which most of these women — Neuberger, Slipman, Toynbee, Sofer — came is, of course, the left. What made these one-time members of socialist parties abandon the organisations which, for all their faults, have always held that women have a right to a life outside the home, that sexual equality is a valid political principle? Not so much the policy issues, it seems, for these women of the left (Celia Goodhart is different, with her stress on policies for Europe and defence); rather it is the *form*. They came to hate the style and character of the left. They all came to believe that the left was so encrusted by tradition and by intractable allegiances that it could neither change itself nor society as a whole. The left was no longer a force for reform — theirs is a social democratic version of the view of André Gorz and Ernesto Laclau that the working class can no longer be the agent of revolution.

For Polly Toynbee, as for the men from Marxism, there are structural reasons for this. She sees the Labour Party as being in part a 'victim of its own success'. It made the working class materially more comfortable and raised 'bourgeois' aspirations — especially among women. She joined the Labour Party at 16. She was still a member when the SDP was launched in March 1981. She says she despaired at the 'institutional corruption and constitutional inertia' of the party.

Julia Neuberger also joined the Labour Party at 16 as a member of what would once have been the classic socialist family — the progressive, reforming Jewish model rather than working-class archetype. Her parents were German Jewish refugees. She grew up with politics in her blood, she says, standing as the communist candidate in the mock elections at school, becoming the membership secretary of the Labour Club at Cambridge University where she was studying to be an archaeologist. And there, in 1972, she found herself taking part in an inquiry into corruption in the Labour Club; twice as many votes had been cast in an election as there were members. It was not an experience to bind a nice young woman to the heart of a political organisation and she fell out of party politics. The idea of doing good, helping people, righting social ills through her own efforts, through the structures and morality of liberal Judaism superseded Labour politics and she became a rabbi and activist in Shelter and the Child Poverty Action Group.

Sue Slipman — whose spectacular leap from the Communist Party to the SDP (while claiming she had not changed her politics at all) occasioned the most comment at the time — says she despaired at trade unions delivering anything for their poorest members, mostly women. Sue is infinitely cynical about what unions are for and what they do; their opposition to privatisation is, she suggests, no more than their preference for a state system which provides jobs for the boys.

## A rare space

There is nothing peculiar to women in these reasons for preferring social democracy to socialism. Indeed, it is striking that none of the women mentions *women* as a reason for joining the SDP, for turning a decisive back on a history of allegiance to a socialist party. If they regret the loss of that historical link, stretching back through at least two centuries of notable and moving struggles for a better life, it is the history of political reform they miss, not the principle of opposing capitalism. 'Yes we are anti-socialist; we're not anti-capitalist, we're pro-capitalist', says Sue Slipman. 'We want a classless meritocracy'. 'Although I called myself a socialist', says Polly Toynbee, 'I was never out to smash capitalism. I was always for a mixed economy.' In this, they have the votes of Roy Hattersley, Denis Healey and probably Neil Kinnock: whatever else they've been putting their minds to in the last few months they have not been devising a strategy for smashing capitalism. It's doubtful if the British Communist Party thinks smashing capitalism is on the cards. Washing it away with irresistible doses of democracy perhaps, but not smashing it.

At first sight it's easier to discern the difference between the Labour Party leadership on the one hand and David Owen and Bill Rodgers on the other than it is between Labour and these women. For it is among the men of the SDP that the strenuous reach for the middle ground, the embrace of conventional political procedure, the unprompted condemnations of the left, the silences on impulses for reform is most apparent, and most sharply marks their break with the left. While the women at Rosie Barnes's reception were waiting uneasily for David Owen to arrive, they imagined him making heroic speeches in the House of Commons against capital punishment, firmly upholding social democracy's claim to be a civilising force. In fact, he was locked in complex negotiations with the Liberal Party.

And this difference is perhaps what makes the SDP women so important for their party and in part explains the rare space they have been able to occupy. They have not only a freedom to think about political form which only those excluded from the political process enjoy. They *also* have at their fingertips a new constituency of suffering which they can mine to provide a substantial basis for a programme of caring reform. And that is where women come in: women the poorest, women the least powerful, women the most exploited, women the most ignored. Who speaks for them? Who acts for them? Women for Social Democracy are claiming the job, and with it the party's mantle as the great political force for reform. 'This document', says *Freedom and Choice for Women*, the Alliance's policy for women, 'will help to establish the Alliance as the real heirs of the reforming movement which, over 200 years of British history, has the defence and extension of justice and individual liberties as its main concern.' Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley, launching their programme for women last week, headed by the proposal for a Ministry of Women, know only too well the resonance of that claim.

Sue Stapely, the SDP's prospective candidate for Chertsey and Walton, a family solicitor and an influential voice in the 'Freedom and Choice' programme, says her experience of women's fate in marriage and divorce has strongly shaped her feminism. She insists that it is not class that explains women's sorry lot in divorce but 'the proprietorial attitudes of men and the subservience of women', found across social classes. 'What touches me most', says Polly Toynbee, 'is the sheer bloody awfulness of women's lives'.

With one voice, the women of the SDP claim as their greatest policy achievements the insistence that selected state benefits be paid to women, not men, and their 'carers' charter'. Unlike Labour, they think state benefits must 'target the poor'. So does Norman Fowler; so do the hard right; so said David Owen just the other day. Only the women can give this a faintly reforming tinge because for them this means a radical effort to help women, not a patrician insistence that the poor survive an obstacle race of means testing to prove their fitness for a smidgeon of the public wealth.

## Networking to success

The women's policy proposals go through with deceptive unanimity, says Polly Toynbee, not because everyone agrees with them, but because no one dares argue against them. The women have an unaccustomed latitude because the SDP has no power, no governmental responsibility; and because in a new party there are no traditions, no immovable institutions, to provide arguments about what is impossible. So far, says Polly Toynbee, the women have won all their arguments. And that is what gives them a confidence which no other constituency, male or female, in any other party, enjoys.

The women established their foothold by informal and at times devious means. They eschewed institutional means and operate outside the cumbersome procedures of vote-nobbling and caucus procedure which so befouls the smooth course of women in the Labour Party. They have done this through 'networking', a modish term much used by successful businesswomen here and, particularly, in the USA. Indeed, the American ethos of successful women plus state enforcement of equal opportunities attracts and influences SDP women. It has none of the class overtones of the British model. Networking here means a small number of women taking it on themselves to provide information and encouragement through telephone conversations and training schools to other women. Much of this work in the early days was shouldered, say all the women, by Polly Toynbee. Yes, she concedes, her telephone bill was 'horrendous'. It is not a political form which the poor and overworked can use.

They 'surreptitiously' acquired constituency profiles, established contacts with women in constituencies, and then phoned likely women to propose they put themselves forward, armed with information which male rivals did not have. It made all the difference. A phone call from a famous columnist on a national newspaper suggesting that you have a right, a duty to present yourself as a possible MP must be fairly irresistible to someone with an ordinary quota of ambition and susceptibility to approval by the famous. It's a far cry from the dispiriting trudge round embattled and parochial selection committees by someone like Joan Ruddock.

The results of all this provide us with the average SDP woman. Break down the details of the 58 prospective candidates and you have a 44-year-old woman with 2.1 children with a degree and working either as a teacher or an educational



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psychologist or doing voluntary work while she brings up her children.

She is not Labour defector, but a woman who before 1981 was not involved in party politics. But she had strong feelings about the wrongness of British society and politics and leaped at the new SDP as her chance of getting involved in moulding politics in her image. Flo Clucas, a Liverpool councillor and prospective candidate for Halton, says that in 1979 she had felt 'there had to be a resurgence of something to show we care'. Despite a passionately Tory grandmother, who taught her that Labour meant bolshevism, she rejected the Tories as racist and harsh. But Labour, bolshevism apart, ignored women's actual role in society. Sue Steel, a bouncy sort of person from Wokingham who says she is known as Action Steel, claims she is *the* typical SDP woman and that means 'someone who is active and enthusiastic'. She runs a word processing agency and organises 'sponsored action' among 'my ladies', certainly wouldn't call herself a feminist, thinks the state shouldn't help gays and lesbians who can help themselves, but should be there to help those who can't.

'The leading women of the SDP are more feminist than their cadres. But the cadres, hungry for political involvement and for political advancement, are happy to follow their lead. They like the 'carers' charter', which revolves around the payment of benefit to women who care for dependants, because it *doesn't* challenge women's role in society; it softens the harsher injustices of it. The fact that SDP women are prepared to talk about the common experience of all women while they refute the notion of a common *class* experience owes more to their ambivalence about the left than to any theoretical position.

## No harsh edges

It is not possible to imagine a long-term political future for SDP woman's commonsense nice-ness with its profound eschewal of political conflict, except in the fortuitous gap opened up between the highly politicised wings of Labour and Conservative. If people did vote according to gender — and for the first time, more men than women vote Conservative, more women than men vote for both Labour and the Alliance — then the rejection of conflict is particularly attractive to women. It is the one constant gender difference which pollsters have been able to discern. Women have a significantly greater dislike than men of violence and conflict whether the issue is crime, defence or trade union rights. But the SDP leadership is unlikely to allow such a profile to shape the party when the exigencies of negotiating for power become dominant.

So far, David Owen appears to be happy with the prominence of women in the SDP. He says that the influence of women has been 'immense', perhaps the 'most powerful' influence in the new party, and attributes this to the fact they are 'not hung up' about position. More than the men, they are not 'living in the old politics' and are therefore of the very essence of the SDP. As a final testament to their value, he says that while his wife would never join the Labour Party, she has joined the SDP. Watching her canvass for Rosie Barnes in Greenwich, it was clear that her American-influenced approach to women's practical success fitted into the SDP with no harsh edges. □

**MEDIA**

# French TV and the Golden Calf

**Yvette Marin**

THE SALE of TF1, the oldest and most popular TV channel in France, earlier this month to Robert Bouygues for FF4.5bn has precipitated a passionate debate on the quality of television. Bouygues, a successful building contractor, has as his partner Robert Maxwell: fears are high that French culture will be blurred into a European or, worse, an American mishmash.

The French had been used, since TV started in 1945, to an entirely state-controlled network whose main purpose was adequately expressed by President Pompidou when he said that 'French television is the voice of France'. Indeed, for many years, officials were nominated by the government and totally dependent on it, taking their orders directly from the prime minister's office. No wonder that inventiveness was lacking and French TV compared quite badly with its European neighbours. Despite a worthy but failed effort by President Giscard D'Estaing to give TV a more enterprising spirit by breaking the monolithic ORTF into seven parts, French TV had remained a rather dull and boring instrument. According to the British writer John Ardagh, French TV was 'timid and self-censoring . . . and unlike the BBC, never acquired the prestige or self-confidence that are essential for creating the standards and attracting the talent required for good programmes'.[1]

The good side of it is that France never suffered a drastic drop of attendance in movie theatres, that the film industry remained quite successful, and that the French did not lose their habit of 'going out' for their leisure activities. Especially in intellectual circles, TV was considered as an inferior form of entertainment, good for the bed-ridden, the very old or the very young. Cultural programmes, when they existed, were derided. It was felt they missed their target.

When the Socialists came to power in 1983, their first move was to change the whole French audio-visual 'landscape'. There were only three channels: TF1, A2 and the regional FR3, all state-controlled and sharing, in unequal parts, advertising introduced in 1963 to help cover their costs. On the whole, they enjoyed a safe, unruffled routine, which the Socialists interrupted when they quickly added three new private channels: Canal Plus, in 1984, the first pay-channel in Europe; and, a year later, Channels 5 and 6. Discussion about what should be the contents of these six channels were at last felt necessary: but that discussion soon shifted to what the French knew best how to handle: politics.

President Mitterrand's decisions were questioned and criticised. Why did he do it? Prestige? Did he want to secure 'his' channel in case he failed in the elections, as he had entrusted Channels 5 and 6 to his personal friends? Or had he sensed the necessity of raising French TV standards to make it an acceptable partner in the 'united' Europe of 1992?

Timid voices, saying it was perhaps time to think of TV in terms of culture and not of power, tried to cover the din of political disputes, but in vain. The first action of Jacques Chirac's government was to withdraw Channel 5 and 6 from their previous owners and re-allocate them through an open competition — described by Jack Lang, the former Minister of Culture, as 'a sad parody of democracy'. From a left-winger, Channel 5 went to a right-winger, Robert Hersant, known as 'the giant of the French press'. Most of Channel 6 went to a Luxembourg consortium, relinquishing the only ambition for diversification ever expressed: to be a 'musical' channel for artists and a younger audience.

IN A HEATED atmosphere of changing camps and powers, the government decided to sell TF1, for contested reasons of bad management and bankruptcy costs. This unexpected move re-focused discussion along the lines of — can a 'private' TV (four networks out of six) rise above triviality, needing as it would to coax the largest possible audience and therefore select 'safe' programmes, like quizzes or sport? Or, moving decidedly away from state control, will TV, with more money and imagination, enter a new era, still yet to be discovered?

First reactions were to try to cancel the sale: TF1 staff denounced 'an illegal move' and 'blatant crookery'. Jean-François Kahn wrote in *L'Evenement du Jeudi* that this step was 'the biggest regression in pluralistic expression our country has ever known'. But Gerard Herzhaft, author of an influential book on the media, *Pour une Mediatheque*, is convinced that:

> The full meaning of TV has not yet been grasped by our societies. We are only in the prehistoric age of the medias. The image has superseded the written word, but we don't know yet how to use it. Since Gutenberg, and only in a very short span of time, a few centuries, mankind has achieved a formidable leap forwards with the development of books and the press. An even bigger progress is to be expected through the audio-visual revolution we are now witnessing. What is happening now is the inevitable, if painful, dying of the unfit species.

But there is another school of thought, led by young philosopher Alain Finkielkraut[2]:

> Remember the fall of the Roman Empire, when its people were only interested in circus games? Why should we adapt to the lower level? Has any major change, any advance in human history ever been made by the mass and not by a few inspired and daring personalities? What would have happened if they had had opinion surveys in Moses' time? Sixty-eight per cent of the Hebrews would have been in favour of the Golden Calf, 26 per cent would have opted for one god, with 6 per cent 'Don't knows'. So now, we would probably still be worshipping the Golden Calf, or worse.

Are the French now to worship the Silver Box? Is that worse? □

(1) John Ardagh: *France in the Eighties*, Penguin 1982; (2) Alain Finkielkraut: *La Defaite de La Persée*, Gallimard, 1987.



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# With Europe — for better or worse

*We continue our series on defence with reports on the strains within the two main power blocs — NATO and the Warsaw Pact.* **WILLIAM WALLACE** *assesses the risks and opportunities inherent in the 'inevitable' reduction of the US presence in Western Europe; and* **JANE SHARP** *charts the divisions in the Pact as* glasnost *spreads westwards from Moscow*

IT IS, on the face of it, absurd that the 375 million people of European NATO (including France) should still be dependent on the 240 million people of the United States to defend them against a Soviet Union with a population of only 279 million and an economy much weaker than that of either Western Europe or the United States.

The provisional arrangements of the 1949 Atlantic Treaty, which extended American security protection over a Western Europe still devastated by the disruption of the Second World War, have now persisted for over 35 years, with only marginal alterations in the fundamental political and security relationship. The conventional wisdom in Western Europe has nevertheless remained until very recently that the Alliance will persist in its current form well into the next century — including a continuing US nuclear guarantee, a major commitment of US ground and air forces to Europe, and close consultation between the United States as Alliance leader and its European allies on security and foreign policy issues.

It is already 25 years since underlying questions were first raised about the long-term stability of the partnership. The issues were set out very clearly by the German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, and his dynamic young defence minister, Franz-Josef Strauss. They argued that transatlantic economic and security relations would suffer increasing strains unless the adjustment in economic weight which was under way — and the adjustments in military contribution which followed from German rearmament — were matched by adjustments in decision-making on Alliance strategy and security policy. The Kennedy Administration attempted to respond, setting out in John F. Kennedy's 'Declaration of Interdependence' of 4 July 1962 a vision of a new Atlantic partnership in which the construction of a 'European pillar' would bear equal weight with the role played by the United States.

## European pillar

The concept of a European pillar has now become a commonplace: the subject of a separate chapter in the 1985 UK Defence White Paper, the focus for many a European ministerial speech. But West European governments still hesitate about its actual construction. The reason for their hesitancy, now as in the 1960s, is that there are fundamental contradictions in both American and European views of what such a shift of balance would involve.

For the United States, support for West European integration depends upon the assumption that a more united Europe would continue to accept American leadership, while shouldering a larger share of the burdens of Alliance; thus provoking sharp ripostes whenever greater European coherence produces an assertion of distinctive priorities. For the West Europeans, closer defence co-operation is needed both to reassure the United States that its partners are bearing a fair share of the burden, and to promote distinctive European security concerns not only in Washington but also in Moscow.

These contradictions have long been buried, but they are never far below the surface. George Younger entitled his speech to the *Wehrkunde* conference in Munich this February 'Europe or America: a false dilemma'. Yet the content of his speech demonstrated the *reality* of the dilemma, in its admission of the very different perspectives West Europeans now hold on East-West relations from their American partner, in the hard choices to be made between intra-European and transatlantic priorities in defence procurement, and in assessments of 'fairness' in burden-sharing.

It is important for adherents of 'alternative' approaches to European security to appreciate the real uncertainties about the long-term future of the Atlantic Alliance which now afflict most of Europe's governments, behind their public assurances of the continuing vitality of NATO. Geoffrey Howe spelt out these uncertainties with remarkable clarity in his speech in Brussels on 16 March.

It is becoming more and more widely accepted, for example, that there will be a progressive reduction in the size of US conventional forces stationed in Europe over the next decade or so: *not* a complete withdrawal but a leaking away of personnel and equipment which might well reduce their numbers from 300,000 to 200,000 or less before the end of the century, whatever happens to East-West negotiations on force reduction. The case for reductions looks unanswerable to many Congress representatives, attempting to contain a burgeoning defence budget, a third of which is spent on the overall European commitment, while the 'threat' no longer appears so focused on the North German plain. The shock of Reykjavic crystallised European concern that the 'old' certainties of flexible response and extended deterrence are disappearing under new concepts, SDI among them. Controls over technology transfer demonstrate US nationalism, and raise major questions about future collaboration in defence procurement.

## Left ducks the dilemma

On the right, the centre and the left, European politicians and experts are attempting to come to terms with these developments, to which Gorbachev's active East-West diplomacy has added a further new dimension.

If Conservative governments have found redefinition of West European interests painful, their socialist oppositions — most of all in France and Britain — have found it little easier.

References to France are almost entirely absent in recent peace movement and Labour Party publications; references to Germany West, East or re-united are scarcely more common outside European Nuclear Disarmament. The problem of providing reassurance to German public opinion during the slow transition from collective to common security is glided over. But in France and Germany, on the right and on the left, the liveliest question is the one which few in Britain wish to consider: how to supply the security guarantee which the US nuclear guarantee has until now provided to Federal Germany until a more confident East-West relationship is established, and whether that guarantee for the foreseeable future needs to contain a nuclear element.

France and Germany rank with with the United States as Britain's three most important security partners. It is no use taking refuge in comparisons between Britain's position and those of Sweden and Switzerland, countries which alternative defence writers are much happier to discuss. The key to Britain's security — which is also the key to European security — lies in Central Europe. American domination of the Atlantic Alliance has not only served to maintain a divided Europe (as E.P. Thompson argues) but also to prevent the re-emergence of a dominant Germany (as French politicians of all parties are sharply aware). Any lessening of the American role in Western Europe, and of the Soviet role in Eastern Europe, risks bringing to the surface the old pattern of European politics, of which Germany was the centre.

## Bring in Britain

The intensity of the Franco-German dialogue reflects an uncomfortable awareness within both governments of the difficulties of managing such a transition, not only in terms of carrying their own publics with them but also in terms of the mistrust and uncertainties the process may evoke among their neighbours, East and West. Close Franco-German discussions on defence were initiated in



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1982. They included nuclear as well as conventional topics from the outset. A succession of German politicians, most notably Helmut Schmidt, have floated the idea of a French nuclear guarantee substituting for the no longer reliable US guarantee.

Recognition that British participation was desirable both to reinforce German security and to give added weight to West European views in counterbalance to the United States led first to trilateral meetings and then to the relaunching of the seven-nation Western European Union (with the three Benelux states and Italy). French concerns about their ambivalent relationship with Germany have also been demonstrated in a succession of overtures to Britain in the past year: most strikingly in the warm reception given to David Steel and David Owen on their visit to Paris last September, and in the progress made towards a closer bilateral defence relationship in the talks between British and French defence ministers in Paris in March 1987.

This is not to argue that the *only* conceivable path towards a European security system is through accepting the developing Franco-German concept of a West European defence entity, including if necessary a nuclear component. That is the argument advanced by David Owen. It *is* to argue that no British political party can develop a coherent defence and disarmament policy without addressing itself to its implications for France and Germany. It may be possible to win over their governments and their publics to a different policy, intelligently presented and determinedly pressed. It is not possible to ignore the problems which a failure to carry French and German opinion with British policy would pose.

Those who argue the case for a non-nuclear strategy must therefore provide an alternative model for West European security, which addresses itself to the politics and political conflicts of our neighbours and to the interdependence between our security and theirs. Nuclear or non-nuclear European pillar or third force, under French, German or collective leadership, we will need some coherent structure for West European defence over the next 10 to 20 years — unless we accept the idealist case that we can leap direct from one security system to another, leaving politics behind as we jump.

Thompson and others have sought to sweep aside the whole case for Western European security co-operation as leading to the creation of 'a mini superpower'. Dan Smith, for CND, attacked the Europeanist tone of last year's Liberal/SDP Commission on Defence and Disarmament as undermining Britain's sovereignty over its own national security. Both reactions fail to recognise the real movement which is under way in approaches to European security outside the peace movements, or to accept that the political obstacles with which the governments are grappling are large and unavoidable. Mrs Thatcher, after all, has moved towards an active *Ostpolitik*, visiting Moscow, Budapest and Vienna to supplement her regular exchanges with Paris, Bonn, Rome and the Hague. Mr Kinnock and his advisers need to develop as active a *Westpolitik*, devoting at least as much attention to Paris and Bonn as to Washington.

**William Wallace**

*William Wallace was an adviser to the Liberal/SDP Alliance Commission on Defence and Disarmament and is the Liberal /SDP candidate for Shipley.*

# Gorbachev needs Eastern doves

TIME WAS when blind loyalty was the required relationship between the East European states and the Soviet Union. It may be changing: Mikhail Gorbachev, in Prague last week, may prefer to see a willingness to innovate and experiment — albeit within well-defined limits.

His liberalisation is welcomed by both leaders and public: the greatest fear is that he will run out of space in which to continue it. A Polish joke, told me by a Hungarian, illustrates the mood. On a visit to the Kremlin, the Pope shocks his entourage by stooping to kiss Gorbachev's feet. 'Why kiss his feet, Holy Father?' they ask. 'My sons', the Pope replies, 'don't you understand that this man was born in a lowly place, among animals, and that he too will be crucified?'

But the satellite states differ. At one extreme is *Romania*, where Nicolae Ceaucescu presides over the most restrictive and authoritarian regime in the Warsaw Pact. The most alarmed by Gorbachev's initiatives, he has sharply criticised proposals for market socialism and private small-scale companies, with which Gorbachev hoped to spur the Soviet economy.

At the other extreme is *Hungary*, where almost all the party leadership is reformist and feels it has something to teach the Soviets when it comes to economic initiatives and political reform. Matyas Szuros, chairman of the Hungarian parliament, noted recently that the Soviets are only now making the distinction — long made in Hungary — between political opinions and crimes against the state. Yet things are far from calm in Hungary. There is resistance to the draft, a growing movement of 'Green' environmentalists and, with the economic slow-down since the 1970s, dangerously disappointed expectations of improvements in the standard of living.

Among the potential successors to Janos Kadar, one of the more liberal possibilities is Imre Pozsgay, who has criticised the Hungarian economy in much the same terms that Gorbachev has used to criticise the Soviet system. The more conservative party officials, however, would prefer to carry out Hungarian reforms quietly, and at their own pace, rather than at a pace set by Moscow. Having just signed new economic agreements with Britain, they are particularly conscious of the problems caused with the West in the aftermath of the Polish crisis, when sanctions against Poland tended to rub off on them, too.

In *Bulgaria* the response to Gorbachev has been even more cautious. Last year, Gorbachev made no bones about the fact that he disliked Todor Zhikov, and considered Bulgaria to be an unreliable trading partner within the bloc. Nevertheless, even in orthodox Bulgaria, modest economic reforms have been under way for the past four years. Officials there now say that rigid centralised planning is counter-productive and that competition is necessary to improve the quality of manufactured goods.

## Leaders miffed

*East German* party leaders were miffed last year when Gorbachev gave them the same pep talk that he gave to all the other East Europeans; 'treated us like the Bulgarians!' they complained. Erich Honecker's response was to note how successful the East German economy was already, implying that he did not need lecturing from the less efficient Russians on that score. Moreover, since members of the East German Politburo attribute a great part of their economic success to strict Party control, they would rather not risk upsetting the apple cart with political liberalisation.

Erich Honecker is, however, enthusiastic about Gorbachev's arms control initiatives. In late 1983 and early 1984, he registered his displeasure at being forced to accept new Soviet nuclear-capable missiles in response to the deployment of American cruise and Pershing II missiles in Western Europe. He therefore welcomes Gorbachev's promise that, once an INF agreement is signed, the SS-22 missiles moved into Czechoslovakia and East Germany in '84-'85 will be withdrawn.

On the other hand, East German leaders are always more apprehensive than their counterparts elsewhere in Eastern Europe about Soviet moves towards improved relations with the West, in particular with West Germany. Honecker would rather set the pace of inner German relations himself, lest better relations between Bonn and Moscow come at the expense of East German interests. Recent visitors to East Germany report, however, that the general public, and particularly the church activists, are increasingly vocal in support of the Gorbachev initiatives.

THE MOST nuanced response to Gorbachev is to be found in *Czechoslovakia,* which is both gearing up for the succession to Husak, as well as undergoing some modest economic reforms under the prodding of Prime Minister Lubomir Strougal. The initial Czech response to Gorbachev was cool and uncertain to say the least. As in East Germany, the Czech press did not publish Gorbachev's early speeches in full, with the result that the general population is now avidly reading the Soviet press for the first time in years — and finding rich pickings, too. *Literaturaya Gazetta* recently carried an interview with Alexander


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Dubcek's old college roommate and party colleague Zdenek Mlynar, now living in Vienna, and reports from the Moscow peace forum included an interview with Milos Forman, the film director who left Czechoslovakia in 1968 and whose films are mostly banned in his homeland.

Although the Czechs are not as prone to public demonstration as the Poles, many observers predict some kind of confrontation in Czechoslovakia soon. While Charter 77 activists and veterans of the Dubcek era are taking heart from Gorbachev's new line, the hardliners installed by Brezhnev in 1968 continue with old-style political trials of the Jazz Section; though most admit the sentences were lighter than might have been expected in the pre-Gorbachev era. As long as Gorbachev is riding high in Moscow, reformist elements like Strougal will gain stature and the old Brezhnevites will find themselves in something of a cleft stick. Should they make a *volte face* in order to adhere to the new Moscow line or maintain the old hardline regardless? Party leader Gustav Husak dithered for months before deciding in mid-March on allegiance to Moscow at all costs; and did so in a speech to the Party Central Committee that startled everyone with its enthusiastic endorsement of the new Soviet reforms.

## In Polish steps

Of all the East European regimes, Jaruzelski and the rest of the *Polish* leadership appear most genuinely enthusiastic about Gorbachev. They feel that his disarmament initatives will promote better East-West relations and generate conditions under which they will enjoy more breathing space within the bloc.

As for Gorbachev's political and economic reforms, Party spokesman Jerzy Urban notes that amnesty for political prisoners in Poland preceded similar moves in the Soviet Union, and talks of the extreme convergence of recent Soviet and Polish proposals for workers' councils and 'freedom of the press'. The population in general, and Solidarity activists in particular, are sceptical, given recent Polish experience with workers' councils. Poles have by far the greatest political freedom in the bloc, but their expectations are higher than most and they remain vehemently opposed to all Soviet influences; opposition that has recently found expression among the young in a nascent draft resistance movement. Nevertheless, Adam Michnik and other intellectual leaders of the 'opposition' have expressed some optimism about Gorbachev himself.

In sum, the Eastern European response to Gorbachev's political and economic reforms has been a mixture of enthusiasm, resistance and scepticism; on the arms control front, however, his policies are uniformly popular. Indeed, if he wants to move to a zero option for short and intermediate range missiles, as he suggested on his recent visit to Prague Gorbachev may need to exploit the support of Warsaw Pact foreign ministers when dealing with his own hardliners at home.

**Jane Sharp**

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# A tactic whose time has come

***We report on why people should vote tactically and, opposite, give the first full list of where. On p16, Robin Cook MP takes a small step towards proportional representation***

TACTICAL VOTING is now part of the country's voting calculations. A MORI poll for *The Times* last week showed 'a greater awareness of tactical voting': more and more Labour and Alliance supporters now declare themselves willing to vote for the other's candidate if it means getting their sitting Tory MP out. The movement has had the beatification of Professor Eric Hobsbawm, writing in the current issue of *Marxism Today*. TV 87, the organisation which has done much to popularise the issue, launches regional campaigns this week and next in Birmingham, Manchester and Bristol.

Confusion surrounds it, however, and the confusion is justified. If the tactic is to take off, then it must be clarified as far as possible. There are at least three reasons for campaigning for the use of the tactical vote: though they are not mutually exclusive, we should be plain who is pushing what for which end.

First, a widespread tactical vote will almost certainly benefit the Alliance: because of its low parliamentary base, and the many more votes needed to elect an Alliance MP than either a Tory or a Labour one, any arrangement which secured Alliance seats would benefit the party disproportionately. That is one good reason why Alliance leaders have been more favourable to it — David Steel even going so far (*NS* 23 Jan) as to give it something close to an endorsement, subsequently softened in a *Weekend World* interview. It's a fair bet that Alliance people will push tactical voting quietly and locally — but then, so will some Labour people, too.

They will do it mainly for the second reason: to get the government out at all costs. The MORI poll showed up to 50 per cent of prospective Labour voters looking kindly on a pact between Labour and the Alliance. TV 87 is stressing this line, as did Professor Hobsbawm: it is based on the presumption that there will be an anti-government majority in the polls, and that the splintered opposition had better hang together or be hung separately by a third-term Mrs Thatcher. The drawback, plainly, is that many Alliance voters may be presumed to plump for the government rather than Labour on a second choice, and will thus not cast a tactical vote which would help elect a Labour-dominated coalition. This, in turn, would mean more Labour supporters voting tactically than Alliance voters, thus the Alliance benefit being even more disproportionate. That may be so, says TV 87; but many Alliance voters will be genuinely anti-Thatcherite, and are unlikely to see a Labour-Alliance coalition as being extreme. The fact that the campaign cannot be leakproof does not vitiate it.

The final reason is fairness and freedom. This line is being put by Lord (Michael) Young of Dartington, who has formed a Centre for Electoral Choice as a clearing house for information about voting, and how to do it most effectively. The CEC's first publication, *A Guide to Local Opinion Polling* — to be published at the end of this month — is aimed at encouraging local media to poll the constituencies within their areas where tactical voting could make a difference, and publish the results during an election campaign. The pamphlet publicises the work of national polling organisations like MORI, Harris, Gallup and NOP; and of colleges which have polling centres, such as the Universities of Dundee, East Anglia, Lancaster, Leicester, Strathclyde and Warwick and the Polytechnics of Oxford and Plymouth. The costs of having a national pollster for a local poll varies between £3,500 and £6,000; the colleges charge between £750 and £1,500. Young and his assistants — Rita Cruise O'Brien and Gwyneth Vernon — have had encouraging response from local media and reckon many will run polls jointly or singly during the campaign.

If so, then Young's aim will be fulfilled. He claims that 'the numbers of people committed to any one party . . . is falling every year. These relatively uncommitted voters need unbiased information about the standing of the parties locally if they are not to waste their votes.'

Such up-to-the-minute information *is* essential if tactical voting is to succeed. The tables opposite are a slightly revised list of seats first revealed by TV 87 during their launch some two months ago: it is based very largely on the 1983 election results, and though it may be taken as a crude guide, it can be no more than that. An example: the Lincoln seat, listed as 'too close to call' because of the closeness of the Labour and Alliance votes in 1983, has since then shown a marked swing to Labour in its district council results, with Labour typically achieving between 35 and 40 per cent of votes cast compared to the Tories 55-60 per cent and the Alliance scoring 7 per cent or less.

The list will be updated again after the local elections throughout most of the country on 7 May — though the exercise will be a difficult one because of the differing boundaries, and more particularly because local results and national voting can be wildly apart — as in May 1979, when Labour took 10 per cent more support in the local elections than in the simultaneous general election. But it is the constituency-by-constituency polling which will be the real data on which the new breed of tactical voters must rely.

This coming election will thus be central to determining whether or not Young's thesis — that the uncommitted voter is now the norm, or becoming so — is right or wrong. If it is right, it is a sign that the face of electoral politics may be changing very profoundly indeed. □



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# Constituencies vulnerable to tactical voting

*(Percentage vote by party in the 1983 election)*

| Too close to call | Con | Lab | All | Other | Lead Party |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aldridge—Brownhills | 50.7 | 24.9 | 24.4 | 0.0 | Lab |
| Birmingham Edgbaston | 53.7 | 21.0 | 22.4 | 2.9 | All |
| Birmingham Hall Green | 49.1 | 27.3 | 23.6 | 0.0 | Lab |
| Blackpool North | 51.1 | 21.7 | 25.9 | 1.3 | All |
| Blackpool South | 50.6 | 24.8 | 24.0 | 0.7 | Lab |
| Brighton Pavilion | 51.5 | 23.9 | 24.6 | 0.0 | All |
| Broxtowe | 53.5 | 21.3 | 25.2 | 0.0 | All |
| Calder Valley | 43.7 | 29.4 | 27.0 | 0.0 | Lab |
| Cambridge | 41.5 | 29.7 | 28.2 | 0.6 | Lab |
| Chester, City of | 47.1 | 28.2 | 24.7 | 0.0 | Lab |
| Crawley | 48.1 | 26.2 | 25.7 | 0.0 | Lab |
| Croydon Central | 53.8 | 23.3 | 22.9 | 0.0 | Lab |
| Croydon North-West | 42.3 | 24.2 | 31.9 | 1.6 | All |
| Davyhulme | 46.0 | 26.9 | 27.2 | 0.0 | Lab |
| Derbyshire South | 43.8 | 29.2 | 27.0 | 0.0 | Lab |
| Ealing Acton | 49.2 | 26.7 | 23.6 | 0.5 | Lab |
| Eddisbury | 53.5 | 21.0 | 25.5 | 0.0 | All |
| Erewash | 45.3 | 25.0 | 22.2 | 7.5 | Lab |
| Gedling | 54.1 | 20.6 | 25.0 | 0.3 | All |
| Gloucester | 48.5 | 26.2 | 24.0 | 1.3 | Lab |
| Gloucestershire West | 45.8 | 24.7 | 29.5 | 0.0 | All |
| Great Yarmouth | 50.5 | 25.3 | 24.3 | 0.0 | Lab |
| Halesowen & Stourbridge | 48.4 | 25.0 | 25.6 | 1.0 | All |
| Hayes & Harlington | 40.3 | 29.9 | 29.0 | 0.8 | Lab |
| Hendon North | 49.9 | 23.7 | 25.6 | 0.8 | All |
| High Peak | 46.4 | 26.0 | 27.6 | 0.0 | All |
| Hornchurch | 47.0 | 26.9 | 24.7 | 1.4 | Lab |
| Ilford North | 51.3 | 25.3 | 23.4 | 0.0 | Lab |
| Lancaster | 50.3 | 24.9 | 24.4 | 0.4 | Lab |
| Langbaurgh | 41.7 | 31.4 | 26.9 | 0.0 | Lab |
| Leeds North-East | 47.6 | 23.8 | 28.1 | 0.6 | Lab |
| Lincoln | 46.4 | 27.5 | 25.1 | 1.0 | Lab |
| Loughborough | 52.9 | 23.4 | 22.7 | 1.5 | Lab |
| Luton North | 48.3 | 26.2 | 25.5 | 0.0 | Lab |
| Mitcham & Morden | 42.7 | 28.8 | 27.4 | 1.1 | Lab |
| Newark | 53.8 | 24.6 | 20.6 | 1.0 | Lab |
| Northampton South | 53.6 | 23.0 | 23.4 | 0.0 | All |
| Nuneaton | 40.5 | 30.6 | 27.9 | 1.0 | Lab |
| Rugby & Kenilworth | 50.9 | 22.7 | 26.4 | 0.0 | All |
| South Ribble | 49.1 | 26.6 | 24.3 | 0.0 | Lab |
| Southampton Itchen | 41.5 | 27.1 | 31.5 | 0.0 | All |
| Southampton Test | 45.2 | 28.1 | 26.7 | 0.0 | Lab |
| Stafford (BE) | 40.4 | 27.4 | 31.8 | 0.4 | All |
| Staffordshire Mid | 52.1 | 22.4 | 25.5 | 0.0 | All |
| Staffordshire Moorlands | 53.8 | 24.2 | 22.1 | 0.0 | Lab |
| Stockport | 42.1 | 29.0 | 27.6 | 1.3 | Lab |
| Uxbridge | 53.6 | 21.6 | 24.8 | 0.0 | All |
| Warrington South | 41.9 | 30.0 | 27.3 | 0.8 | Lab |
| Warwick & Leamington | 50.9 | 22.0 | 25.9 | 1.2 | All |
| Watford | 48.0 | 26.0 | 26.0 | 0.0 | Lab |
| Wellingborough | 48.9 | 26.0 | 24.7 | 0.4 | Lab |
| Welwyn Hatfield | 47.7 | 25.8 | 26.5 | 0.0 | All |
| Wirral South | 53.7 | 22.6 | 23.7 | 0.0 | All |
| Worcester | 49.5 | 22.7 | 27.4 | 0.4 | All |
| Worcestershire Mid | 50.9 | 25.2 | 23.2 | 0.7 | Lab |

| Vulnerable to Labour | Con | Lab | All | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Amber Valley | 41.7 | 35.3 | 21.3 | 1.7 |
| Barrow & Furness | 43.6 | 34.7 | 21.7 | 0.0 |
| Birmingham Northfield | 42.7 | 37.5 | 19.0 | 0.8 |
| Birmingham Selly Oak | 44.9 | 34.4 | 20.7 | 0.0 |
| Birmingham Yardley | 43.2 | 36.3 | 19.5 | 1.0 |
| Bolton North-East | 43.2 | 37.8 | 18.3 | 0.7 |
| Bolton West | 45.1 | 31.5 | 23.4 | 0.0 |
| Brentford & Isleworth | 47.4 | 29.3 | 22.1 | 1.2 |
| Bristol North-West | 43.9 | 32.6 | 23.6 | 0.0 |
| Bury North | 45.5 | 40.2 | 14.4 | 0.0 |
| Bury South | 44.0 | 36.5 | 19.5 | 0.0 |
| Cannock & Burntwood | 40.9 | 36.9 | 22.1 | 0.1 |
| Corby | 42.6 | 36.1 | 20.3 | 1.0 |
| Coventry South-West | 45.0 | 31.9 | 22.6 | 0.5 |
| Darlington | 44.6 | 37.8 | 17.4 | 0.2 |
| Derby North | 43.7 | 36.8 | 19.4 | 0.1 |
| Dewsbury | 39.4 | 35.3 | 25.3 | 0.0 |
| Dudley West | 46.2 | 31.4 | 22.4 | 0.0 |
| Dulwich | 40.6 | 35.7 | 22.0 | 1.7 |
| Ealing North | 45.1 | 32.8 | 21.5 | 0.6 |
| Ellesmere Port & Neston | 45.9 | 32.6 | 21.5 | 0.0 |
| Elmet | 47.3 | 31.8 | 20.9 | 0.0 |
| Feltham & Heston | 43.4 | 39.4 | 15.9 | 1.3 |
| Gravesham | 47.4 | 31.9 | 19.7 | 1.0 |
| Hampstead & Highgate | 41.2 | 33.7 | 24.8 | 0.3 |
| Harlow | 41.1 | 34.2 | 24.2 | 0.5 |
| Hornsey & Wood Green | 42.2 | 35.0 | 20.9 | 1.9 |
| Ilford South | 45.4 | 34.3 | 19.5 | 0.8 |
| Keighley | 42.6 | 37.0 | 19.8 | 0.6 |
| Kensington | 46.0 | 29.5 | 22.1 | 2.4 |
| Lancashire West | 46.3 | 33.8 | 20.0 | 0.0 |
| Leicestershire North-West | 44.6 | 32.6 | 21.7 | 1.1 |
| Lewisham East | 40.4 | 35.9 | 22.0 | 1.7 |
| Lewisham West | 44.0 | 38.4 | 16.8 | 0.8 |
| Luton South | 41.9 | 33.3 | 24.9 | 0.0 |
| Manchester Withington | 39.3 | 34.2 | 26.2 | 0.3 |
| Newcastle-upon-Tyne Central | 40.8 | 35.8 | 22.3 | 1.1 |
| Norwich North | 44.7 | 32.4 | 22.6 | 0.3 |
| Nottingham South | 45.9 | 34.1 | 20.0 | 0.0 |
| Pendle | 44.2 | 32.3 | 23.5 | 0.0 |
| Peterborough | 47.1 | 29.1 | 22.7 | 1.1 |
| Putney | 46.5 | 35.9 | 16.3 | 1.3 |
| Rossendale & Darwen | 47.0 | 31.8 | 21.2 | 0.0 |
| Slough | 42.9 | 36.9 | 18.5 | 1.7 |
| Streatham | 46.5 | 31.5 | 21.2 | 0.8 |
| Tynemouth | 48.6 | 31.3 | 20.1 | 0.0 |
| Wallasey | 46.0 | 32.5 | 21.6 | 0.0 |
| Warwickshire North | 41.9 | 37.1 | 20.9 | 0.1 |
| Westminster North | 43.2 | 39.4 | 15.7 | 1.7 |
| York | 41.3 | 35.1 | 23.0 | 0.6 |

| Vulnerable to the Alliance | Con | Lab | All | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Basingstoke | 51.3 | 19.3 | 28.8 | 0.6 |
| Bath | 47.1 | 15.2 | 36.0 | 1.7 |
| Bedfordshire North | 52.0 | 21.1 | 26.3 | 0.6 |
| Bridgwater | 52.3 | 17.7 | 30.0 | 0.0 |
| Brigg & Cleethorpes | 50.7 | 20.0 | 29.3 | 0.0 |
| Bristol West | 49.1 | 19.5 | 29.4 | 2.0 |
| Carshalton & Wallington | 51.3 | 17.5 | 29.6 | 1.6 |
| Chelmsford | 47.6 | 5.1 | 47.0 | 0.3 |
| Cheltenham | 50.6 | 7.6 | 41.0 | 0.8 |
| Congleton | 48.7 | 19.9 | 31.4 | 0.0 |
| Crosby | 47.2 | 10.2 | 42.0 | 0.6 |
| Derbyshire West (BE) | 39.6 | 19.8 | 39.4 | 1.2 |
| Eastleigh | 51.0 | 18.5 | 30.5 | 0.0 |
| Enfield Southgate (BE) | 49.6 | 11.9 | 35.6 | 2.9 |
| Erith & Crayford | 37.1 | 27.3 | 34.9 | 0.7 |
| Exeter | 46.5 | 22.8 | 29.3 | 1.4 |
| Gainsborough & Horncastle | 50.9 | 7.7 | 40.8 | 0.6 |
| Gillingham | 51.7 | 17.8 | 30.5 | 0.0 |
| Harrow East | 49.8 | 22.3 | 27.9 | 0.0 |
| Hazel Grove | 46.1 | 12.0 | 41.9 | 0.0 |
| Hendon South | 48.6 | 21.1 | 30.3 | 0.0 |
| Hereford | 48.1 | 7.6 | 43.4 | 0.9 |
| Hertfordshire North | 49.0 | 18.6 | 32.4 | 0.0 |
| Hertfordshire West | 46.7 | 22.3 | 31.0 | 0.0 |
| Hexham | 51.5 | 17.0 | 31.5 | 0.0 |
| Kettering | 48.4 | 21.1 | 30.5 | 0.0 |
| Leeds North-West | 46.6 | 22.2 | 29.0 | 2.3 |
| Littleborough & Saddlew'th | 42.8 | 25.3 | 31.0 | 0.9 |
| Maidstone | 50.9 | 12.1 | 37.0 | 0.0 |
| Milton Keynes | 48.0 | 22.2 | 28.4 | 1.4 |
| Norfolk North-West | 43.5 | 18.9 | 37.6 | 0.0 |
| Oxford West & Abingdon | 47.7 | 16.9 | 33.3 | 2.1 |
| Penrith & Border (BE) | 46.0 | 7.4 | 44.6 | 2.0 |
| Plymouth Drake | 50.6 | 20.3 | 28.6 | 0.5 |
| Pudsey | 45.7 | 17.8 | 35.8 | 0.7 |
| Reading East | 51.6 | 19.4 | 27.4 | 1.6 |
| Reading West | 52.1 | 19.3 | 28.3 | 0.3 |
| Richmond & Barnes | 46.5 | 7.1 | 46.4 | 0.0 |
| Saint Albans | 52.1 | 10.9 | 37.0 | 0.0 |
| Sheffield Hallam | 50.6 | 19.7 | 28.4 | 1.3 |
| Shipley | 49.7 | 21.6 | 27.7 | 1.0 |
| Shrewsbury & Atcham | 49.5 | 18.4 | 32.0 | 0.1 |
| Southport | 50.4 | 8.3 | 40.5 | 0.8 |
| Stevenage | 39.4 | 24.0 | 36.1 | 0.5 |
| Stroud | 51.3 | 16.8 | 31.9 | 0.0 |
| Suffolk South | 50.7 | 18.1 | 31.3 | 0.0 |
| Surrey South-West (BE) | 49.3 | 6.7 | 43.4 | 0.2 |
| Twickenham | 50.4 | 7.5 | 40.8 | 1.3 |
| Wansdyke | 50.6 | 21.7 | 27.4 | 0.4 |
| Westbury | 51.4 | 10.0 | 37.4 | 1.2 |
| Wyre Forest | 48.4 | 19.2 | 32.4 | 0.0 |

| Labour's 'easy wins' | Con | Lab | All | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Basildon | 38.7 | 35.6 | 25.7 | 0.0 |
| Batley & Spen | 39.6 | 38.0 | 21.6 | 0.8 |
| Bradford North | 34.3 | 30.9 | 25.5 | 9.3 |
| Bristol East | 40.5 | 36.9 | 21.3 | 1.3 |
| Edmonton | 42.5 | 39.8 | 16.9 | 0.8 |
| Glanford & Scunthorpe | 38.5 | 37.3 | 24.2 | 0.0 |
| Halifax | 40.9 | 37.4 | 21.7 | 0.0 |
| Hyndburn | 42.2 | 42.2 | 14.6 | 1.0 |
| Kingswood | 40.4 | 37.1 | 22.5 | 0.0 |
| Leicester East | 38.9 | 37.0 | 21.1 | 2.9 |
| Leicester South | 40.3 | 40.3 | 17.7 | 1.7 |
| Norwich South | 38.8 | 35.3 | 24.4 | 1.5 |
| Nottingham East | 40.4 | 37.1 | 19.2 | 3.3 |
| Nottingham North | 39.5 | 38.7 | 19.4 | 2.4 |
| Oxford East | 40.0 | 37.3 | 22.7 | 0.0 |
| Sherwood | 41.0 | 39.7 | 19.3 | 0.0 |
| Swindon | 39.2 | 36.7 | 24.1 | 0.0 |
| Wrekin, The | 39.0 | 36.7 | 24.4 | 0.0 |

| Scottish constituencies | Con | Lab | All | SNP etc | Lead Party |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aberdeen South | 38.9 | 29.9 | 26.2 | 5.0 | Lab |
| Angus East | 44.1 | 8.0 | 11.4 | 36.5 | SNP |
| Argyll & Bute | 38.6 | 9.3 | 27.5 | 24.6 | All |
| Ayr | 42.8 | 26.8 | 25.6 | 4.8 | Lab |
| Banff & Buchan | 39.7 | 7.8 | 15.0 | 37.5 | SNP |
| Cunningham North | 38.7 | 34.6 | 18.1 | 8.6 | Lab |
| Dumfries | 44.5 | 20.8 | 23.9 | 10.8 | All |
| Eastwood | 46.6 | 20.1 | 27.6 | 5.8 | All |
| Edinburgh Central | 38.0 | 31.1 | 25.6 | 5.3 | Lab |
| Edinburgh Pentlands | 39.2 | 23.9 | 29.3 | 7.6 | All |
| Edinburgh South | 36.8 | 28.6 | 28.6 | 6.0 | Lab |
| Edinburgh West | 38.2 | 20.1 | 37.1 | 4.6 | All |
| Fife North-East | 46.1 | 6.5 | 40.2 | 7.2 | All |
| Galloway & Upper Nithsdale | 44.7 | 11.4 | 13.1 | 30.8 | SNP |
| Kincardine & Deeside | 47.7 | 15.2 | 29.4 | 7.7 | All |
| Moray | 39.2 | 7.3 | 18.3 | 35.2 | SNP |
| Perth & Kinross | 40.2 | 9.9 | 24.7 | 25.2 | SNP |
| Renfrew West & Inverclyde | 32.7 | 29.0 | 29.5 | 8.8 | All |
| Stirling | 40.0 | 27.9 | 23.9 | 8.2 | Lab |
| Strathkelvin & Bearsden | 36.5 | 25.6 | 28.7 | 9.2 | All |
| Tayside North | 51.0 | 5.5 | 19.2 | 24.3 | SNP |

| Welsh constituencies | Con | Lab | All | PC etc | Lead Party |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bridgend | 38.4 | 35.2 | 23.2 | 3.2 | Lab |
| Cardiff Central | 41.5 | 24.2 | 32.6 | 1.7 | All |
| Cardiff North | 47.1 | 20.0 | 30.5 | 2.4 | All |
| Cardiff West | 38.0 | 33.6 | 25.5 | 3.0 | Lab |
| Clwyd North-West | 51.0 | 16.3 | 29.1 | 3.7 | All |
| Clwyd South-West | 33.8 | 27.4 | 30.2 | 8.6 | All |
| Conwy | 41.7 | 17.1 | 30.8 | 10.4 | All |
| Delyn | 41.6 | 29.4 | 25.8 | 3.2 | Lab |
| Monmouth | 49.2 | 21.7 | 28.0 | 1.1 | All |
| Newport West | 38.0 | 36.6 | 24.2 | 1.2 | Lab |
| Pembroke | 46.9 | 29.2 | 20.7 | 3.2 | Lab |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 48.0 | 25.8 | 23.9 | 2.3 | Lab |
| Ynys Mon | 37.5 | 16.9 | 12.3 | 33.3 | PC |



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# Labour needs electoral reform

***The electoral system cannot cope with a three-way split, argues* ROBIN COOK MP. *So Labour must be in the vanguard of change***

I HAVE to begin with two prudent disclaimers. I of course look forward with confidence to a Labour government with a clear majority after the next election. I still smart from the observation of a Shadow Cabinet colleague who responded to my report that the polls pointed to a hung parliament with the lofty rebuke that I had studied psephology to the point at which I lost wisdom. As he kept his seat in the subsequent election and I lost mine, he clearly knew more about psephology than I did.

Secondly, I have been party to no discussion with the Alliance on this or any other matter. After the deluge in 1983 I gained a moment of notoriety for my comment that the only relationship open to Labour with the Alliance was war to the knife, and I meant every word of it.

Indeed, for most of this parliament Labour *did* succeed in shoving the Alliance firmly into third place. It is cruelly unfair that because of an ill-starred by-election in the wrong place we are confronted with an Alliance revival at the wrong time. It is particularly unfair to Neil Kinnock who has supplied Labour with its strongest leader since Attlee and has forged our penny farthing machine into an effective campaigning vehicle.

For the time being, which may though not last very long, we are faced with the consequences of an Alliance surge, one of which is the possibility that electoral reform will force its way on to the political agenda. The fundamental reason why this question may become more pressing is that the failure permanently to restore two-party politics leaves vulnerable an electoral system which cannot cope with a three-way split. This root problem is likely to surface in two ways.

## Catatonic state

The first is public opinion. At any point in time there is a majority in favour of electoral reform varying from between 2 to 1 and 3 to 1 and the effect of general elections is to increase the proportion who regard it as an important issue. Nor need it only be Alliance supporters who feel the results are unfair. Nearly all recent opinion polls register support for the Conservatives at less than their vote in 1983 which was in turn lower than the Tory vote in 1979. Labour supporters also are likely to rebel at an electoral system which throws up ever increasing Tory MPs on the back of ever-diminishing Tory votes.

The second way in which electoral reform may become a pressing issue is that in the event of a hung parliament (an unlikely one as we have noted) the Alliance will want to talk about nothing else. We all know that if we ever need Alliance support the first thing they will ask about is electoral reform, which makes it unfortunate to say the least that the very mention of it should induce a catatonic state in most Labour audiences.

The pity of it is that everyone else's lack of interest in electoral reform has allowed discussion of it to be dominated by the particular scheme adopted by the Alliance — proportional representation by the single transferable vote. It should be noted that not everyone is to have a share in this reform as certain 'scantily populated areas' are to retain a single MP on the present basis.

On inspection these areas turn out to be the Isle of Wight, Orkney & Shetland, Caithness and Sutherland — which comes close to saying that the rest of us need PR but the Alliance need their seats. The remainder of Britain is to be grouped into mega-constituencies, such as the whole of Leeds or Suffolk, with a third of a million electors sharing five or six MPs. The electoral results may be fairer, but the system itself would be less democratic as it would extinguish the intimate link between MP and constituents and reduce the influence of local community lobbies to vanishing point.

Fortunately, there is a solution — the Alternative Vote — which was the system recommended by the Royal Commission on Electoral Systems in 1910 and was the basis of a bill that actually passed in the Commons in 1931 but was blocked in the Lords. Under this scheme the present constituency links would be retained, but the ballot paper would enable the elector to list his or her preference among all the contenders. The bottom candidate would then be eliminated and his or her second preferences transferred until one of them secures a clear majority of votes cast. If this sounds familiar to many readers that is because it is the voting system by which every office is filled in the Labour Party with the technical difference of a single ballot paper in place of exhaustive voting.

## To AV and AV not

There are three principal advantages of electoral reform along the lines of AV which prompted me to float it as a runner as far back as 1984.

First, it preserves the principles of constituency accountability and representation which are the particular strengths of the British political system. Indeed, it enhances those principles by ensuring that every MP requires majority support within his constituency. By contrast, at the last election a majority of MPs were elected by a minority of their constituents and 70 of them, myself included, were elected with fewer than 40 per cent of the votes cast by our constituents.

Second, it enables electors to cast their first vote honestly, free from any anxiety about a wasted vote, while preserving their right to vote tactically with their subsequent preferences. This would immediately remove the single most corrosive force in contemporary British politics — assiduously fostered in the parallel article in this edition — namely the pressure on electors to vote not for the candidate with whom they most agree, but for the one who has the best chance of defeating the candidate with whom they most disagree. The greatest beneficiary of this liberating change would be Labour parties throughout the South of England who are the most conspicuous victims of the third party squeeze exerted by the present system.

The third attraction of AV is that it restores legitimacy to the electoral system, but leaves the two major parties with a sporting chance of obtaining a parliamentary majority or at any rate forming an effective minority administration. Admittedly, it would result in substantially more third party MPs, but many fewer than would be returned under PR.

This of course is the conclusive proof that I have not been in collusion with the Alliance, who will fight AV tooth and claw because they would prefer no reform at all, rather than submit to a reform which restores legitimacy to the system and permanently postpones PR. The advantage to Labour of espousing AV is that it brings public opinion behind us and isolates the Alliance with its partisan proposals. Conversely, standing by the present system will leave us taking on public opinion with the very lively prospect that we will lose and find ourselves saddled with PR because we never offered anything better. □

## The Australians AV it

ONLY ONE country uses the Alternative Vote system (of voting for candidates in order of preference, in single-member constituencies), according to the Electoral Reform Society. Australia has had it since 1918 for its House of Representatives, and for state elections except in Tasmania.

The Alternative Vote was also being used for some elections in Canadian provinces between the 1920s and the 1960s, and was introduced in Rhodesia in the 1950s, only to be abolished by Ian Smith on his Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965. It has twice come close to being used in Britain: it was recommended by a Speaker's Conference for rural district elections in 1917, and it was on the point of being brought in for parliamentary elections by the minority Labour government in 1931 when a general election was called.

Our Political Editor Peter Kellner commissioned computer simulations of the effect of the Alternative Vote on the 1983 election from Clive Payne of Nuffield College, Oxford (*NS* 17 February 1984). Assuming four-fifths of Labour and Tory votes for third-placed candidates transferred to the Liberal/SDP Alliance, and Alliance second-preferences split equally between Labour and Tories, the result would have been 29 fewer seats for the Tories, nine fewer for Labour and 40 more for the Alliance. A 60-40 split of Alliance voters in Labour's favour would have resulted in 53 fewer Tory seats, 15 more Labour seats and, again, 40 more Alliance seats.

**John Rentoul**



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# Don't talk to me, Argentina

*Five years after the Falklands war, a democratic government in Buenos Aires waits in vain for negotiations which may be critical for its survival.*

**JIMMY BURNS** *reports*

Rex Features

**The installation of a democratic president in Argentina: surely it should make a difference?**

ON THE EVE of his inauguration as Argentina's democratic President in December 1983 Raul Alfonsin told me: 'A fundamental argument that used to be used by the people of Britain as a reason for not negotiating with us has now disappeared. We are no longer a de facto regime, nor are we run by a dictatorship. We Argentines have finally understood that we will always be a tin-pot country if we don't follow a golden rule: the armed forces must come under the firm control of civilian powers.'

The extent to which the fact of Argentine democracy should fundamentally alter the parameters of the Falklands debate has divided British political opinion over the last five years. Alfonsin has not hidden his disillusionment with the way that the Thatcher government has treated Argentina little differently from the way successive British governments carried on their links with military governments prior to the war.

The Foreign Office has made much of their confidence-building measures between 1983-86: the restoration of financial and trade links, cultural and academic exchanges, the relaxation of visa restrictions, and the offer of collaboration on fishing in the South Atlantic. In essence, however, Mrs Thatcher's resolute refusal to discuss sovereignty has remained like an immovable boulder in the way of a more genuine reconciliation between the two countries.

Moreover, it seems evident that even Britain's facade of goodwill towards Argentina has been for the most part a Foreign Office initiative extracted with great difficulty from Number 10. Mrs Thatcher's intransigence has indeed often seemed to be less calculating than instinctive. Her emotional attachment to the islands since the war was symbolised by the importance she personally attached to her arduous trip (she travelled for over ten hours across the Atlantic in a Hercules 150 transport) to the islands at Christmas 1982, her regular personal messages to the islanders and the relatives of dead British soldiers. In a BBC TV documentary last year called 'The Englishwoman's Wardrobe', Thatcher revealed her most cherished dress was a 'sombre dark navy creation' which had sustained her throughout the Falklands conflict.

## Democratic credentials

On the broader political front her distaste for anything smacking of appeasement was demonstrated in her stormy political divorce from Francis Pym, her 'wet' Foreign Secretary, and her anger at the Archbishop of Canterbury's suggestion, during a remembrance service in St Paul's, that prayers should be directed for the dead of both sides.

Mrs Thatcher has been most hardline whenever her opponents have seemed to be less so. Thus, she regarded as almost tantamount to treason the meetings which Neil Kinnock and David Steel separately held with Alfonsin in the course of 1985. Both opposition leaders adopted a far bolder stance on the Falklands issue than anything contemplated so far by the government.

In the Kinnock-Alfonsin summit held in Paris, both parties agreed on the need for the re-establishment of diplomatic and commercial relations between Argentina and the UK. They also backed the idea of an early initiation of negotiations to explore 'the means for solving the outstanding problems between the two countries, including all aspects of the future of the Islands' (diplomatic shorthand, as used in the case of Gibraltar, for an open agenda, including the issue of sovereignty, without preconditions and without prejudging the outcome).

A similar policy was endorsed by David Steel, who went to his meeting with Alfonsin in Madrid armed with the following argument prepared in a background briefing by Dr Peter Gold, Steel's foreign policy adviser: 'Alfonsin not only merits different treatment from that of General Galtieri because of his democratic credentials but also needs to be seen to be treated differently if he is to retain his legitimacy.'

Gold accepted that the survival of Argentine democracy does not rest solely on the Falklands issue: the economy and human rights trials of the military have caused Alfonsin greater problems in recent months. At the same time British governments — whether Conservative or Labour — have never in the past put their foreign policies into practice simply to strengthen democracy throughout the world. The Liberal case, shared by the SDP and by Labour, is that the survival of democracy is perhaps the one issue in which Britain, Alfonsin, and the islanders should share a common interest.

*For it is arguable that if Argentina were to continue to be treated no differently than it was under the military, the 'Malvinas' could provide the armed forces in the future with the opportunity to condemn the sterility of peaceful diplomacy and instead rehabilitate themselves in a war of revenge in which the political, economic, and human costs for both sides could be much greater than the last one.*

OVER THE last five years Britain has not only refused to talk about sovereignty, it has also taken steps to reinforce its presence on the islands — thus making any negotiated settlement that much more difficult. During this period the kelpers have been given the kind of privileged status denied to colonies like Hong Kong and Gibraltar and to those communities closer to Westminster which have been at the rough end of Thatcher's economic policies. The government has granted



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the islanders full British nationality, given them a large degree of local autonomy within a new local constitution and financial control over a 200-mile fishing zone which doubles up with a military protection zone already in existence and challenges territorial waters claimed by Argentina.

The fishing zone — couched in the diplomatically soft phrase of a 'conservation and management zone' — was unilaterally declared by Britain last October. Since then some 215 licences have been granted, bringing in a revenue of £10m. The majority have gone to Japan, Taiwan, Poland, Spain and Korea. Ironically, the British fishing industry itself has been given three licences — just one more than Chile — although some British fishing companies have gone into joint ventures with the Japanese.

## Secret exchanges

It is understood that in recent weeks there have been a series of secret diplomatic exchanges between London and Buenos Aires through the mediation of Washington aimed at defusing tension in the area. Although it has much of its attention on other more pressing issues, the Reagan administration is believed to be worried about the potential for a military incident in the zone and is anxious to secure co-operation.

With the Argentinian armed forces currently on a collision course with Alfonsin over the issue of human rights, the fear is that hardline sectors of the Argentine navy may breach the theoretical buffer zone in the area and provoke a military incident with the Royal Navy. At present, the new fishing zone is patrolled by two civilian boats and a civilian aircraft with the back-up of military surface ships.

The Foreign Office is keeping its cards close to its chest. But the US proposal appears to hinge on both countries agreeing jointly to police the area, co-operate on conservation, and share revenue — while leaving the issue of soveriegnty on ice. Such a deal would be a great deal more difficult for the Argentines to swallow and would largely depend for its acceptance on how skilfully it can be packaged for domestic consumption.

Argentina is having to cope with the tensions of high inflation and a long parade of junior officers taking their place in the dock on torture and murder charges. But the Malvinas remains a priority issue which no government can afford to ignore for long. Only last month, the opposition Peronist Party, which hopes to recover ground in September's mid-term elections, urged the navy to defend their country's territorial rights and called for a confiscation of all British assets in Argentina.

Alfonsin is anxious to be seen to be getting somewhere on the Malvinas. If there was an agreement on fishing in the next few weeks, it could signify the biggest diplomatic breakthrough since the war. In the meantime, however, it remains only part of the overall problem.

THE BRITISH military presence on the islands has become a key political factor in the Falklands story. Its central feature, the huge all-weather airport at Mount Pleasant, arose out of an emotional response immediately after the war; it has only recently been completed with as yet no apparent agreement within the British government as to its strategic relevance.

Officially, Fortress Falklands has been justified over the last five years as purely reactive to the perceived Argentine threat. While Alfonsin has declared his non-belligerence, he has not declared formally a cessation of hostilities. Buenos Aires has pruned its defence spending but this has not stopped the democratic authorities from re-equipping the armed forces with the arms contracts signed by the junta but not delivered till after their fall. Some British officials also point to the fragility of Argentina's new political system as a further reason why it cannot allow itself to be caught off its guard again.

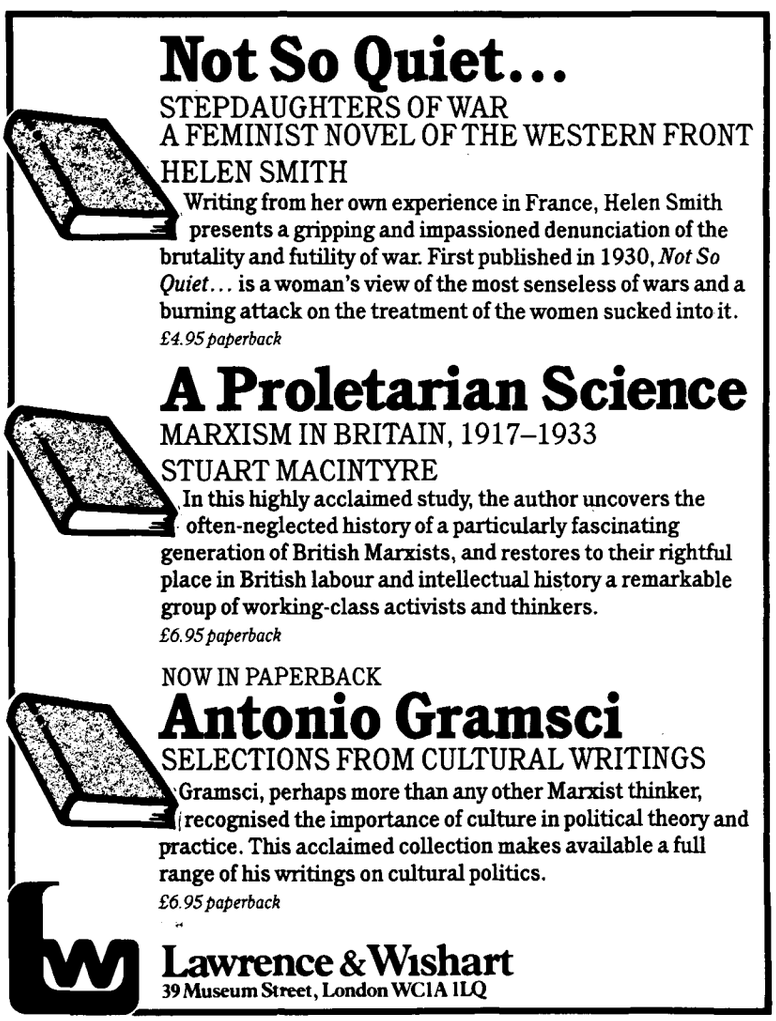
Equally, the British government is insistent that the military presence would be reduced if Buenos Aires was to declare peace. The fact remains, however, that the large presence of British troops — proportionate to the population — has over the last five years had an enormous political impact on the islanders, fuelling intransigence towards Argentina and making any future negotiation that much more difficult.

For a community that has always lacked a deeply entrenched local culture, war has brought in its wake a wealth of experience, legend and folklore capable of binding this small civilian population together in a sense of common identity. Along the waterfront of Port Stanley, the monuments speak for themselves: the Falklands Islands' only two major monuments, in remembrance of the two World Wars, have been joined by a third. The Liberation Statue, paid for by the islanders as tribute to the British Task Force remains the most striking symbol of kelper feelings and the most poignant local reminder of those three months in 1982 which briefly shook the world.

But such symbols arguably do not justify the enormous expenditure on the islands over the last five years: for the sake of a population of just under 3000, Britain has spent over £30 million in development and over £2.5bn in military facilities. That comes out of a special Treasury allocation outside the defence budget: but it cannot be so easily excerpted from the increasingly heated defence debate.

The islanders face a harsh choice. It was summarised in a background paper prepared for the Falklands government earlier this year: 'A climate has been created in which the Falklands can no longer be a peaceful, pleasant backwater if it is to be politically credible.' Yet if it *is* to develop economically, it cannot do so without the assistance of Argentina, and thus a diplomatic agreement between Argentina and Britain. The desirability of *that* is likely to get a closer scrutiny in the next Parliament. □

*Jimmy Burns was the Buenos Aires correspondent for the* Financial Times *1981-86. His book* The land that lost its heroes: The Falklands, the post-war, and Alfonsin *is published by Bloomsbury Publishing.*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# The naked index

DRUG CLINICS in the northwest claim that non-doctors have frequently been able to check names on the register of drug addicts at the Home Office. The register is intended to stop addicts going to several different doctors and obtaining multiple prescriptions for controlled drugs.

Carol Woolley, co-ordinator at the Warrington Drug Dependency Clinic, reports that staff at her clinic — which does not have a doctor on the staff — regularly used the index. When this was challenged by the Home Office last week, she made a test enquiry about a name and within four minutes was phoned back with confirmation that the person was a registered addict. Concerned about the accessibility of the index, she says: 'It's a waste of time. The whole reason for notification has gone out the window. Now it just makes drug-users reluctant to come in. Some system of monitoring is needed — but it has to be better than this one.'

Alan Parry, head of the Mersey Regional Health Authority's Drug Information Unit, claims that he 'can no longer give an unequivocal guarantee of confidentiality to addicts who come for voluntary treatment' and is worried that this may deter 'closet' drug users from seeking help. Dr John Marks, consultant psychiatrist and Mersey Regional Consultant for Drug Dependency Services, considers the index to be 'reasonably' secure, but hastens to add that the degree of confidentiality which appears reasonable to a doctor or civil servant would appear a lot less reasonable to an addict worried about losing his or her job.

Officially, return phone calls are made in response to enquiries, and only after the bona fides of the enquiry have been checked, but those who have used the system claim that calls are returned within minutes — and routinely information is passed on to medical secretaries or nurses rather than directly to doctors.

The Home Office Drugs Unit said that they had 'heard of the allegations, but they had not been substantiated'. Ironically the index, which seems to depend on the good faith of the medical profession to maintain any confidentiality, was set up largely in response to allegations of drastic over-prescribing by certain doctors. One Liverpool GP with extensive experience of drug-using patients, Dr Mike Ross, considers it 'reprehensible that I should have to register people just as they are trying to come off after they may have been secretly addicted for years'.

Others doctors point out that the register is for statistical purposes precisely because most addicts get their drugs from street sources, and its continuing existence may well inhibit them from getting help to come off. It would appear that the index has outlived its usefulness, existing out of ministerial inertia, but still posing a potential threat to civil liberties.

**Ian Williams**


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ECONOMICS

# The need for exchange controls

**Adrian Ham**

EXCHANGE controls are like an overcoat. They limit freedom of manoeuvre in some respects, and in some conditions they may be quite unnecessary. But in adverse economic conditions they can be a very important protection for a government which wishes to make its own economic policy, rather than have policy made for it in Tokyo or New York. Geoffrey Howe dispensed with the 'overcoat' in the high summer of 1979, when North Sea oil turned Britain's traditionally accident-prone balance of payments into massive but temporary surplus. Now, as the oil reserves dwindle, an economic winter is approaching.

The structure of argument to support the special pleading against controls, largely from the City, is familiar to anyone who has read the Whitehall briefs for an incoming administration with new policy ideas. First, the 'National Interest' is served by leaving things as they are. Second, if the first argument is lost, it would be impossible to bring in the policy anyway. Third, if the second argument is lost, the policy could only be applied with imperfections. Fourth, if the third argument is lost, the policy would be 'very unpopular'. And lastly, if all arguments fail, the new policy is contrary to the sweeping tide of international (or national) trends. Grant and Goodhart's article 'Why we can't have foreign exchange controls again' (*NS* 10 April) contained all the classic items of this type of Whitehall wet blanket, albeit in a slightly less structured form.

Has the national interest been served by the freeing of exchange controls? Although this is probably the most important point of all, it is the point upon which G&G are most elusive. They only say that if the insurance companies had not had freedom to pour money abroad, 'the pound would have been ever higher than the very high level which destroyed Britain's manufacturing base in the early 1980s'. This is a curious argument. That the outflow of capital did not prevent the destruction of industry immediately contradicts the benefit claimed for it. Furthermore, most economic observers are aware that balance of payments surpluses can quickly be absorbed by government policies of expansion. So the boost to exports given by North Sea oil could have allowed massive internal expansion of the economy, keeping sterling competitive through the normal surge in imports that such expansion brings. Mrs Thatcher chose to depress the economy, and to push real interest rates to almost unprecedented heights. This made it particularly advantageous for holders of wealth to put money abroad, at terms far more favourable than the long run exchange rate of sterling would have allowed. Good for the City, poisonous for industry.

By implication, the authors suggest that there is some huge national interest served by 'London's status as a financial centre', but this is not quantified. In fact, overseas service earnings of British banks are worth less than a tenth of all our service earnings, and the large sums frequently quoted for the City's balance of payments earnings relate principally to insurance company earnings and the overseas portfolios built up by financial institutions since 1979. These would continue to exist whether exchange controls were there or not. The whole sum of City worth, quoted as £7.6 billion in 1985, amounted to less than one-tenth of total UK exports. The much vaunted build-up of credits and debits in 'Eurocurrencies' by the City has actually generated a deficit in most years since 1975, in terms of interest payments.

A telling argument in favour of complete freedom for international capital flows would be that progressive freeing of exchange controls has led to faster UK growth, higher investment, and faster growth in world trade. But the facts point to an exactly opposite effect. Under a regime of much greater limitation on world capital flows, in the 1950s, 1960s, and even the 1970s, world trade grew much faster than it did in the 1980s. World trade grew at 9 per cent a year in the '60s, 6 per cent in the '70s. In the 'liberated' '80s, it has only managed 3 per cent a year. This must in part be a result of the tendency of governments to compete for 'hot' money with ever-higher interest rates.

The second line of argument relates to the practicality of having controls at all. It was refreshing that Grant and Goodhart did not use the 'computerisation makes it impossible' argument. They argue instead that action is impossible because sterling liabilities to foreigners are very high these days. But this case is offset by their acknowledgment that determined action on the UK's huge overseas assets in portfolio and other holdings can bring counterflows of currency to the UK.

Their third classic argument is that exchange controls did not work too well under the old regime, and would be imperfect. On the other hand, in their discussion of the various flows governed by the old controls, they missed out the most quantitatively significant type of capital flow — the 'leads and lags' associated with payments for imports and exports.

As for the final argument, 'the apparently inexorable trend for capital to flow freely across the developed world', time will tell. The Bank of England and the Treasury argued much the same things about the return to the Gold Standard in 1925. Coincidentally, the dichotomy between City self-interest, and national well-being was much the same. 'I would rather see finance less proud, and industry more content,' wrote Winston Churchill as Chancellor of the Exchequer, just before taking Montagu Norman's advice. It was a disastrous decision — and achieved the exact opposite.

The freeing of sterling from exchange controls in 1979 has also been disastrous. Industry is less content; 'finance' prouder, and with usurious levels of interest, much more profitable. □

*Adrian Ham is a former special assistant to Denis Healey when Chancellor of the Exchequer.*



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# Maureen Duffy

***War; Thatcher's Britain; English critics and ideas . . .* ALISON HENNEGAN *discusses these and more with one of our most committed, pugnacious and creatively intrepid writers***

John Minnion

OVER THE PAST 25 years Maureen Duffy has published a steady stream of work: poetry, fiction, biography (of Aphra Behn), plays, polemic (on the moral dimensions of humanity's relations with the rest of the animal world) and, in *The Erotic World of Faery*, a literary and psychological enquiry into the metaphysical geography of Fairy Land. It is a body of work remarkable in its richness, strength and daring.

Fellow writers have cause to be grateful to her: as one of the co-founders of the Writers' Action Group (WAG), which fought the successful campaign for Public Lending Right, and for her work on behalf of the Writers' Guild, the British Copyright Council and the Authors' Lending and Copyright Society.

This month her twelfth novel, *Change**, was published. Through the voices and experience of characters from many classes, cultures and countries, it explores England's Second World War.

**Alison Hennegan:** At least five novels published over the past six months have focused on the 1939-45 war. What for you was the lure?

**Maureen Duffy:** Obviously it's a deeply personal spring somewhere. I think that on a cyclical, historical scale, 40 years seems to be about the right length of time for dealing with this kind of happening. *Vanity Fair, War and Peace* and, I think, *Tale of Two Cities* are more or less written at that sort of time span after the event. But I suppose, also, in my case, the deaths of various members of my own family, who were very much alive during the war and very much associated with it in my mind, provided a sort of terminus for me, a personal terminus. And the feeling that now is the time for me to deal with this. I've referred to it a great many times in other works but never done a whole book on it. There were ideas I wanted to embody in the book that seemed to be important in the context of thinking about why we have wars, and trying to understand why we have wars in order not to go on having them.

I'm also very concerned with *England's* war. I do want us to confront *our* war, which, in many ways, we haven't.

**AH:** In the sense of all the shabbier aspects we prefer not to look at? Wheeling and dealing between Allies and Germans at the expense of other peoples, for instance?

**MD:** That, yes. And also decisions to bomb or not to bomb and the fact that we were not always heroic and that there was an aspect of Dunkirk that was suppressed and has never been totally recognised: officers' desertion, riot by angry troops and so on — and what seemed like a glorious retreat was *very* close to being a rout.

**AH:** And, unlike Mons, no angels?

**MD:** No angels. I also wanted to look at different ways of being an English Jew and a continental Jew. And at the way some things got better through *mobility*. 1939 English society, at almost every level, apart from the very top, was incredibly static: it was effectively moribund. When I was evacuated to the country as a child, the people there hadn't been to the next town, let alone London, and *nobody* went abroad. All that is, alas, a good effect of the war, that English society was broken up and moved around. Between the wars women lost the advances they'd made in the First War. And, once again, horrible though it is, *without* the second one it is hard to see how they would have made up that ground again.

**AH:** War constantly produces appalling paradoxes: for example, that many human beings seem to become their finest selves in the most inhumane circumstances; that people achieve superhuman feats in enduring what no one should be asked to endure. *Change* recognises that, although you, as a political animal and writer, constantly speak out against the institutions and ideas which bring about that suffering, both then and now. Is there a battle for you between accepting and rejecting the claim that from suffering comes wisdom, from being tried in the fire comes the finer metal?

**MD:** I think the finer metal may well come from *not* being tried in the fire! If you *are* tried in the fire, with any luck the finer metal will be some kind of compensation, but I don't think trying in the fire is actually *necessary* to the finer metal. I've never believed that. And so I'm never for plunging people into misery in order that they may be made finer metal thereby. In the same way that I have always rejected the romantic fallacy that writers have to suffer in order to produce their best work. I think it's nonsense. I think that in any case there's so much suffering of various kinds built into the human condition and the animal condition that you really don't need to artificially enhance it in order to produce greater people or finer art or whatever.

**AH:** At one point in *Change* a young German Jewish woman, a refugee, writes in her journal that she does not undertand how England and its Empire *can* have produced its poetry and its literature when she sees how it treats its people. Obviously that's *her* voice, but is it a question you



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ask yourself, too?

**MD:** Yes. I think one of the reasons that the foreigners are in the book is to give a view of England from outside, and it is a fact that when middle-class Jewish refugees arrived in this country they were absolutely appalled by the squalor and poverty that they found. And I think this is something that we tend to gloss over and ignore, and it seemed to me very important to point out that the people who *fought* the war were often deeply impoverished and led very squalid and *dwarfed* lives in many ways. A lot of which, of course, is being repeated again.

**AH:** *Change* could be a noun or an imperative. Is that ambiguity intentional?

**MD:** Yes.

**AH:** Although the book is so firmly 'about' the War years, so many of the themes, dilemmas and moral choices have clear echoes in 1987 peace-time England. The cultural and spiritual exile of uprooted and rejected people, for instance, who may be Polish aristocrats, Jewish refugees and black American GIs in 1942 but could be black and Asian Britons now. Is that my reading or your writing?

**MD:** Well, all those things I tend to work out before I begin writing the book, as part of the thematic network, underneath the fictional layer.

**AH:** How much of the network of ideas do you think reviewers will notice and discuss?

**MD:** Ha! Yes, well . . .! I find the general lack of consideration of the *ideas* in books frustrating. The level of general reviewing is very much to tell the story and make one or two fairly arbitrary value judgments, but there is *very* little consideration of the intellectual content of the book. Especially if it's an English book! Occasionally reviewers will pay attention to the intellectual content of a book by a foreigner because that's somehow more decent.

**AH:** Or the translation's not too good and you can't linger over the prose style because you know it's not the author's anyway . . .

**MD:** . . . so you're *forced* to consider the ideas!

**AH:** Why the reluctance? It can't simply be 'Everyone knows the English aren't intellectual'?

**MD:** I think there *is* an element of that still. I think we're very unwilling to consider ideas except when we can see them as pragmatic. To a certain extent we consider *political* ideas because at some point we're going to have to vote and get tuppence off or tuppence on the income tax. But it's all very much at that level. In politics and art generally there's very little general intellectual consideration. And it's something we continue really rather to pride ourselves on. Matthew Arnold is still not dead. In sentimental moments you can think to yourself, 'Ah well, the last time there was a national crisis we did it then and we can do it again — and we didn't *really* know what we were doing *then*, either, but it seemed to work.' But I think it works less and less in this changed world, and in a world based on the proliferation of information technology we really ought to be coming to grips with more intellectual concepts and arguments.

Anyway, reviewers aside, I hope *Change* works. My local bookseller rushed up to me the other day and said, 'I always think of you as a rather *difficult* writer, but I'm really enjoying your new one.' I think — I *think!* — that pleases me.

**AH:** Well, you and your work have always presented a seeming contradiction, haven't you? On the one hand you frequently express very unequivocal anger at insulting assumptions made about what working-class people, especially children and the old, 'can' and 'can't' read, 'will' and 'won't' want to find in shops, schools and libraries. On the other hand, your own work draws very much on 'High Culture'. The contradiction's more apparent than real, but it gets you into hot water, as with the two young women you were telling me about who condemned your work as 'uncreative' and 'irrelevant' to their lives.

**MD:** Yet critically one of the things I do sometimes get clobbered for is the use of the demotic. I certainly hope very much that the individual voices come through in *Change*. To write a novel at all is probably to indulge in a High Art form now, rather than writing an episode of *EastEnders*. But, given that I think we *do* need literary High Art, I still think that *Change* probably has a tap-root to the working-class voice.

**AH:** Plays are perhaps an even surer way of conveying voice?

**MD:** Well, as you probably know, I only began to write novels in the first place because of the difficulty of getting a production for my plays. I think, if there are things you want to say to a *lot* of people, then perhaps you look for a form, *accept* a form, which you know is going to find an audience of several thousands.

**AH:** But not several million? Meaning, are you not interested in writing for television?

**MD:** I *am* interested in it, but my experiences have been very bad ones, largely through unauthorised rewriting and things of that kind. I do also find that the limits on what you're allowed to do are realy too constricting. *If* we get the new Obscenity Bill, for instance, that's floating around and that I have to go to the House of Commons' lobby about tomorrow, then certainly [Dennis Potter's] *The Singing Detective* will become impossible — possibly even [Fay Weldon's] *In The Heart of the Country*, too.

**AH:** Have the political changes of the last ten years made you feel differently about your relationship as a writer to the formal world of politics?

**MD:** I don't think I feel differently about my relationship. I feel very angry and despairing about developments but I don't feel any differently about my need to be, in various ways, involved with it all. Politics *is* the art of the possible. As one area of activity sinks, another emerges. You have to seize what is possible in the changed conditions and do the best you can with that. So, at the moment, my involvement is very much with things like the Authors' Lending and Copyright Society, trying to get more money for writers from different sources, doing it by exploiting publishing rights and secondary rights in a consumer society, but doing it for the collective good.

**AH:** Has the increasingly harsh political climate made areas of moral choice, for you as a writer, become more starkly delineated?

**MD:** I think *that* is true, but in a curous way what's happening is an increasing *fluidity*. The *ground* of argument has shifted so much that it's extremely difficult to see how one could go back to a pre-Thatcherite centrist consensus. She has moved the Centre to the Right so that what seemed legitimate left-wing argument before, just slightly left of centre, now seems loony . . . So, in a curious way, moral choices are *not* becoming more starkly delineated, they are becoming more furred and opaque, and it is extremely difficult, I think, to keep one's ground and keep one's footing. But what causes a book, a novel, or indeed a play or a poem to *happen*, to begin, is something more personal than the general political situation. I think it's a tapping of some unconscious level; something pierces through to that and that provides the creative energy and impetus which then — because I *am* a political animal and writer — is spread through the whole political and ethical structure of the work. And I can't ever quite know where the well-shaft is going to sink, *what* will be tapped. I can think in theory, 'I would like to write a book about such-and-such,' but that doesn't work. Writing itself is conscious but the *movement towards* it is an unconscious process.

**AH:** Wilf, in *Change*, says that not only do people get the governments they deserve, they also get the governments which, deep down, they actually *want*. Do you believe that?

**MD:** I think this government has destroyed all sense of community. Wherever community occurs it has been attacked and destroyed in favour of individualism. It has 'educated' people into a non-human, biological unitary response of 'Myself, my genes and, therefore, my family' — comfort and survival for the biological unit. So although they can see that our pensions, for instance, are shamefully low, and they are disturbed by people dying of hyperthermia — *genuinely* disturbed — yet, because they are constantly bombarded by the consumer society, they are unable to say, 'No, my family, my children will *not* have this, in order that pensions may be raised by five pounds a week.' It leads to the radical shift to the right and towards what is to me an entirely illusory 'freedom of choice'. But, you see, deep down, that *is* what people really want, because that is not a *human* desire: it's a basic evolutionary drive. In being human we try to build on something which is of secondary evolutionary use, which is some form of altruism, some form of communism, of the ant-heap or of the hunting pack of lionesses or dogs or whatever. The appeal can *always* be made to the basic animal needs of warmth and food and survival. And it *is* absolutely basic and essential, but it's not something which is particularly human. But that's why it works, because it is an appeal to something so deep rooted.

**AH:** But even the 'altruistic' appeal to the tribe or pack, rather than to family, leads on to nationalism, 'Our street/town/country is better than yours!'

**MD:** Yes, and that's the problem with *that*. Which is why ideas *matter* — in books, plays, poems, politics — because we have to be always aware of the roots: otherwise we can be exploited and turned any which way. □

***Yes, well . . .! I find the general lack of consideration of the ideas in books frustrating. The level of general reviewing is very much to tell the story and make one or two fairly arbitrary value judgments, but there is very little consideration of the intellectual content of the book.***

*Change *is published by Methuen at £10.95.*



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MUSIC

# Light-hearted note

**Charles Fox**

**Camden Jazz Week**
*Shaw Theatre*

**Carla Bley and Charlie Haden: not the murdered kind**

COMPOSERS WERE DECIDEDLY to the fore at the Shaw Theatre last week. And so, much more unexpectedly, was comedy — whenever, that is, the visiting Dutchmen were on stage. Quite why Holland, homeland of all the plump dignitaries and their wives on those dark-brown canvases, should also harbour the jokiest musical avant-gardists remains a phenomenon to be unravelled. For a long time, though, Han Bennink has been not only one of the most skilful drummers in Europe, able when he wishes to swing as well as create aesthetic disturbances, but also a knockabout comedian in the most literal sense. His appearance in a quintet playing tunes by Thelonious Monk and others confirmed that reputation. Yet Bennink's liking for absurdity was outstripped by the benign effrontery of the Willem Breuker Kollektief, a ten-piece ensemble not to be missed by those sharing my normal queasiness about humour being mixed with jazz. It was good for once to feel confounded

Even more so, perhaps, as the week had begun most earnestly. Monday's evening of chamber works — two by Ornette Coleman, three by Gavin Bryars — made at least a handful of us suspect that the 1950s were being recycled, what with hard bop at the Wag Club and now what sounded remarkably like a resurgence of Third Stream music. Coleman's 'The Sacred Mind of Johnny Dolphin' — with the composer's son, Denardo Coleman, drumming, a trifle incongruously, alongside eight strings, tympani and trumpet — was less satisfying than 'Poets and Writers', using a conventional string quartet. But both lacked the strong sense of identity that is never missing from Coleman the improvising saxophonist.

A quarter of a century ago Gavin Bryars was helping to pioneer free jazz in Britain, playing regularly alongside Derek Bailey and Tony Oxley in Sheffield. But 'Sub Rosa' and 'My First Homage', the latter inspired by memories of the Bill Evans Trio, edged too close to blandness. More interesting was 'By the Vaar', built around the solo playing of Charlie Haden, once the bassist in Ornette Coleman's group (it was noticeable that, when Haden performed a solo entirely alone, he kept returning to the main phrase of Coleman's composition 'Lonely Woman'). Few jazz bassists coax a more individual sound from the instrument. A virtuoso who disdains the kind of flashiness lesser performers go in for, Haden also prefers to stick to playing pizzicato rather than resort to his bow.

Haden has collaborated, both as composer and performer, with Carla Bley, whose work occupied the whole of Tuesday evening. The set by her new sextet was prefaced by a retrospective selection of her work played by The Leicester Bley Band, drawn from students and faculty at Leicester Polytechnic, directed by Gavin Bryars who doubled as bass player and orchestrator. Karen Jones sang, with gestures, a couple of Carla Bley's best songs: 'The Mineralist', its punning lyric and its musical accompaniment satirising minimalism, and the deliciously macabre 'Murder' ('How can I be the victim of a crime/I'm not the murdered kind'). An alto saxophonist, Conrad Cork, supplied the most passionate and adventurous solo playing in the instrumental pieces. Many of Bley's compositions have been theatrical in conception, operatic by implication. Her latest band, however, moves away from brassy textures and those echoes of Kurt Weill in his Berlin days. Indeed, no horns are used at all, just guitar, piano, electric keyboards and two sets of percussion (one Latin-American), all tending to revolve around the bass guitar playing of Steve Swallow, always a remarkable musician but now assuming a special air of authority.

Listening to the Leicester band was to be reminded of how jazz compositions, always considered slightly paradoxical within what is essentially an art of performance, can, if they are individual enough, endure in their own right. It's most obvious in the way that Thelonious Monk's pieces, once regarded as too idiosyncratic for comfort, have been performed with greater and greater frequency since Monk's death, even if some interpreters either ignore or overstate the rhythmic complexities. Not so Steve Lacy, who enjoys the advantage of having worked for a time in Monk's group. Lacy also happens to be a musician who has kept on developing: his style and sound on the soprano saxophone — he never touches any other instrument — totally his own, exactly the man to set loose on this material. Playing at his side was the trombonist George Lewis, able to move from velvety meticulousness, reminiscent of Jack Teagarden or Tyree Glenn, to the snorting antics of a circus or street player. Completing the quintet were the cellist Ernst Reyseger, the volatile Han Bennink (playing time quite superbly with a hint of Dave Tough in his wrecked posture) and Misha Mengelberg, bespectacled, chain smoking, a bottle of Perrier water alongside his piano. The right kind of liberties were taken with pieces such as 'Monk's Mood', 'Bemsha Swing', 'Hornin' In' and — remarkable for some of Lacy's most economical and eloquent playing — 'Reflections'. It was just a pity that the programme contained nothing by the other composer billed for the occasion, Herbie Nichols, apparently as unlucky in death — on this particular evening, anyway — as he was in life.



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Like Bennink and Mengelberg, Willem Breuker was one of Holland's leading free jazz players during the 1960s. He still plays saxophone solos of a dazzling intricacy. Context, however, is everything and, within the Kollektief, Breuker's solos and those of his cohorts — the trumpeter can oscillate between Ziggy Elman's flashiness, Don Cherry's airy voyagings, even Louis Armstrong's majestic toughness — are surrounded by bizzare pastiches of 1920s and 1930s dance music, light classics and the kind of sounds that percolate from Continental cafés and estaminets. Breuker's capacity for parody, his liking for abrupt changes of direction, make it all seem rather as if Monsieur Hulot were at the helm with his gifts for sparking off absurdity. The Kollektief turn up again in London at the Barbican on 26 June so, all being well, sceptical readers can test their own reactions to the joyfulness of this carefully assembled ragbag, slapstick that makes an audience feel happy just to be alive. □

## CINEMA

# Howl!

**Simon Cunliffe**

**My Life as a Dog** (PG)
*Renoir Cinema; Bloomsbury*
**Over the Top** (PG)
*Warner West End; Cannons Haymarket, Oxford Street*
**The Voyage Home: Star Trek IV** (PG)
*Empire Leicester Square, Cannons Fulham Road, Bayswater, Edgware Road*

WITH THE EASTER HOLIDAYS in progress it is not surprising that there are a number of children's films around. Lasse Hallstrom's **My Life as a Dog**, set in the Fifties and based on a novel by Reidar Jonsson, is the tale of high-spirited, accident-prone 12-year-old, Ingemar Johansson. His terminally ill mother is bedridden. Ingemar tries to make life easier for her but his penchant for mischief and a natural affinity for domestic disaster sabotage his best intentions. He wets his bed; in his hands food and drink become unexpectedly animated; he gets caught playing 'I'll show you mine if you show me yours' with the girl next door, under a culvert. And, of course, of all the boys foolish enough to stick their penises into the neck of a lemonade bottle, it is Ingemar who gets his stuck.

He is duly despatched to stay with his uncle in the country, reluctantly leaving his much loved dog Sickan behind. There he makes friends with the best soccer player in the school team, who's worried that her developing breasts will soon disqualify her. He reads lingerie catalogues to the old man downstairs. He chaperones Berit, the local beauty, while she poses naked for a local sculptor. He briefly returns to the bedside of his dying mother, before being sent back to his uncle's house for good. At times when things get really bad for Ingemar, he gets down on all fours and feigns the barking of a dog. At others he is resigned to his fate: 'It's not so bad if you think about it. It could have been worse . . . '

Through Ingemar, *My Life as a Dog* offers a child's eye view of the world, informed by the adult sensibilities of both the novelist and the filmmaker. His antics and eccentric sense of humour, while amusing in themselves, have a way of penetrating the façades of adulthood; of provoking unflattering behaviour and revealing selfish motives in the people and relationships around him. Ingemar has not only the death of his mother and his dog to deal with, but the realisation that the world is neither fair nor perfect — and, in the end, we laugh with Ingemar at our own fallibility.

There are of course plenty of novels and films which deal with loss of innocence. But few manage it in such a touchingly offbeat manner. In the last couple of weeks I've written briefly about realism in relation to radical filmmaking and alluded to it as a kind of narrative mechanism through which we can become locked into movies and, thereby, possibly, into the ideology they contain. Here, in this episodic *Catcher in the Rye*-like tale, realism services nostalgia. Giddy with affection, I confess to being utterly seduced by its simplicity of style, its humour, its originality.

I am less enamoured by **Over The Top**. In this, the latest Stallone vehicle, the musclebound Sly plays an arm-wrestling trucker called (what resonances!) Lincoln Hawk. One day, out of the blue, and under the credits, Linc fronts up at a posh military academy in his battered but trusty 18-wheeler. He's come to collect the 12-year-old son he hasn't seen in a decade. His long-estranged wife is terminally ill — yes, another terminally ill mother — and wishes her son to get to know his father. The problem is that Michael has been spoiled rotten by a grandfather who hates his father's guts and has turned the boy against him. Mother — who functions here, and in many other Hollywood movies, as nothing more than a plot convenience — checks out on cue, leaving the men to get on with it. The best chance Lincoln Hawk has to win back his son, and the fortune he needs to bankroll their future, is at the World Arm Wrestling Championships in Las Vegas. No prizes for guessing the outcome.

The climactic event affords ample opportunity for face-slapping, bicep-baring, even oil-drinking macho bravado. As is the case with Stallone's Rocky persona, here he is very much the underdog. This is an essential ingredient in the tension building process; also in the pervasive American myth of the little man, the loner who, armed only with his self-belief and courage, will win through in the end. Mostly, however, this movie is about succession. Which particular set of values will young Mike inherit? Those of his conniving, arrogant, filthy rich and cultured grandfather; or those of the honest working man, the man who can admit that he has made mistakes in the past, the man who can pass onto his son such vital advice as 'Life doesn't meet anybody half way'? For many the choice may seem irrelevant. It's all one and the same thing. Patriarchy.

Which is not to say that the movie itself should be dismissed. Stallone's films have a habit of proving particularly popular. It would be foolish to underestimate the potential that such big, bright, vibrantly scored pictures have for endorsing the attitudes of their characters and the archetypal fantasies of their makers.

**The Voyage Home: Star Trek IV** has to score points for the off-the-wall premise which has its seemingly ageless crew, Captain Kirk and Mr Spock included, travelling in time back from the 23rd century to 1987. It has to do with humpbacked whales and affords the movie plenty of scope for some inspired special effects, some neat 23rd meets 20th century jokes and a worthy ecological subtext. □

**Yet another station of the cross for Ingemar (Anton Glazelius) in *My Life as a Dog***



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## THEATRE

# Juggling

**Victoria Radin**

**The Tourist Guide**
BOTHO STRAUSS trans. TINCH MINTER and ANTHONY VIVIS *Almeida*
**The Heat of the Day**
ELIZABETH BOWEN adapt. FELICITY BROWNE and GILES HAVERGAL *Donmar Warehouse*

IN BRITAIN we like to keep ourselves inside our neatly-trimmed hedges: although a poet may conceivably write a television column for a newspaper and a drama critic may occasionally metamorphose into dramaturg, neither is likely to write novels or plays — or certainly not both novels and plays.

On the Continent and in the USA people tend to juggle occupations more freely, to the benefit of both the work and the individuals involved. Botho Strauss, the German who wrote **The Tourist Guide**, turned, at 26, from drama critic into dramaturg for Peter Stein's experimental Schaubühne theatre in Berlin, then into playwright as well as poet and novelist; a look through the programme of Pierre Audi's stunning, and stunningly un-English, production of the play reveals many nationalities and a French lighting man, Jean Kalman, who was once philosophy teacher, film critic and cameraman before he became, somehow, lighting designer for Peter Brook. All of these different lives, or livings, are present in this play and this production, which cuts cleanly through standardised expectations to achieve its own eccentric individuality.

The play itself is cast, like *Great and Small*, the only other of Strauss's six plays to reach this country, in the form of a quest or a journey. In the earlier play, which proved too much for the West End and was sheared and chopped, a woman roams about peering into other people's lives, finding only rejection and evidence of fragmentation even greater than her own. In *The Tourist Guide*, two essentially lost and solitary people meet and try to come together to capture an elusive wholeness. Martin is an intellectual of about 45 who thinks that in Greece, 'the source', he may resolve a crisis in his career; Kristine, some 20 years younger, is a drifter who is currently moored to a young archaeologist, a wholly silent but very palpably present character who completes his own journey during the course of the play by dying of drink.

In the wonderful first scene you can see the moment when Tilda Swinton's lanky jolly-schoolgirl Kristine decides to drop her neutral tourist guide's pose and to *have* Paul Freeman's Martin — perhaps as a diversion from her punishing exaltation of her boyfriend, perhaps as a way out of it, perhaps also in the expectation that it is going to end soon anyway. Bounding out of his bungalow the following morning, she continues to appear to him and disappear entirely at her own whim, running away when he wants to keep her but staging a sit-in for days and nights after he has thrown her out. She demands the use of his bath, his phone, even his money: just when he, and we, have decided her interest in him is genuine, she seems to reveal herself merely as an exploiter or a manipulator. Or as an impulsive person whose relaxed and pragmatic attitude is more honest than Martin's self-protective need for certainties and absolutes. Just as it is in life they are a mixture of qualities, both right and both wrong: Strauss makes it impossible for us to judge them.

Once the archaeologist dies, the pair retire to an isolated hut where Greece appears nearly as a third character, confusing them with heat and thirst and echoes of Pan, god of lust and also of confusion. Entombed inside, they each become the other's jailer, subject also to their own quixotic internal moods. Finally Kristine wrenches herself free, probably to move on to another man: their parting is non-committal and meaningless.

Though never bleak to watch, the play is a fairly disheartening study of sexual love; and the programme invokes Strindberg. I disagree: Strauss appears to have come to it with no foregone conclusions; he has no axe to grind. There is somehow here the idea that life is a process of learning which justifies the pain; and that the author has embarked on his work in a similar quest for knowledge. What he is eminently able to do, in a way which reminds me of Chekhov, is to display the arbitrariness of living, the unforeseeable ebbs and flows of feeling not just between people but inside them. Although his characters are, in their separate ways, both greedy egotists — this at least makes them easily recognisable to us all — he foregoes cheap conclusions. Instead the work sets up a dreamy contemplativeness in the spectator, sending one back to one's own life.

Hildegard Bechtler's set of vast stone arch, limestone steps and a sliding glass door and an earth coloured wall to indicate the two dwellings underscores the play's meditative nature, looking like the pieces of one's mind or memory; and Jean Kalman's lighting achieves startling variations of mood and place. Paul Freeman's bearish Martin is wholly plausible as the sort of frightened man who needs to remake reality; but Tilda Swinton, in her much more difficult quicksilver role of Kristine, is a revelation: instantly accessible to us as a certain kind of woman — the kind of unconscious predator other women loathe — she also transcends the type, making the character glowingly and unpredictably alive, moment by moment. I was amazed to read that Swinton had also worked for the Royal Shakespeare Company: her performance, without mannerism or self-consciousness, and Pierre Audi's production, in which sound, light, words and performers create their own universe, stands as a corrective to some of the deadening platitudes currently prevailing at our two big subsidised houses.

Elizabeth Bowen is such an evocative writer — of place, time and those subjective drifts of feeling that Strauss approaches in quite another way — that you'd think she'd transfer easily to the stage, or shouldn't be there at all. Giles Havergal's direction and (with Felicity Browne) adaptation for Shared Experience of **The Heat of the Day**, the love story of two upper-middle-class misfits who come into their own in wartime London, employs a mannered realism which captures the social details we are so besotted with in this country but misses much of the rich emotional confusion of the novel. Stella in particular — brave, armoured but likeably helpless and vulnerable — loses her essence in a central performance that lends too much weight merely to being well-bred; though Mark Lewis is moving as her stoically harrowed lover, who spies for the Germans out of a deep disappointment in England that began in his well-accoutred nursery. Christian Burgess, a very strong stage presence, is quite unearthly as the pair's mysterious blackmailer. There are echoes here of David Hare and Howard Barker: a musing and subjective novel has become an atmospheric but rather belittlingly mannered whither-England? play. □

## TELEVISION

# Obsessions

**Hugo Williams**

I AM GRATEFUL to David Darlow, producer-director of **The Sword of Islam** (ITV) for starting at the beginning in his two-hour documentary on the new Muslim fundamentalism and not fudging the story by suddenly mentioning some new faction without saying who they were or what side they were on, the way they do on the News, greeting one's bafflement with a gay little smile and a wry 'And, finally, the dog who prays for his master's forgiveness . . .' Whether I can pass on any hint of my new understanding of the chaos remains to be seen.

The prime-time documentary was wittily baited (preceded) by one of those genteel slave market open days known as beauty contests, in this case **Miss England** (ITV): 'The blonde, blue-eye Miss Smackinghamshire is wearing a cream birthday-suit with contrasting triangle . . . The red-eyed Miss Cutey Cakes likes torturing small animals and pursing up her lips . . .' One immaculate specimen said she was 'a self-employed beautician'. When asked if she ever had any male clients, she piped, 'It's funny you should mention that, because only last week I was giving a facial to my Dad.' If you'd gone to sleep before Miss Greater Backside was knocked down to the cleaning staff, you might have woken to hear an ex-Broadway theatre critic from Cairo, converted to Islamic extremism following Camp David and swathed in the new female head-gear, railing at such immorality: 'You are obsessed with sex in the West. That is why you walk around naked.' Quite who is more obsessed with sex, those who cover up in hot countries or strip off in cold, is debatable. The real attraction of the new dress code for the disaffiliated multitudes in this two-nation state is not prudery but dignity: 'One way of converting frustration into virtue is religion.' Tell it to Miss Frumpinghamshire.

It all went back to the Six Day War when Nasser's bold new socialism was damned by military defeat. Egypt had abandoned Islam and lost, while Israel had remained true (sic) to its faith and triumphed. Sadat furthered the process of division by opening the door to Western business. Five-star hotels, inaccessible to most Egyptians, lined the banks of the Nile. People surrounding Sadat made millions, while the poor, increasing at the rate of one a minute and unable to gain a living from the land, poured into Cairo, a city built for four million which currently holds 14. Out of this



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**PAVAROTTI:** I think the reason 'Aida' is a great opera is because it's complete, in our region we say it is like the pig, 'Aida' is like a pig, you don't throw anything away. It's popular, very philosophical, even a little rude. . .

**BRAGG:** *La Scala in 1870 was where the young Verdi's first opera was performed and was the place he turned to for the premieres of his last great works. How important do you think La Scala is today?*

**PAVAROTTI:** I think La Scala and the Met are the two most important theatres in the world, even now, very, very, very important for singer and for conductor. . .

**BRAGG:** *The judgement scene in Act 4 of 'Aida' is the high point of the opera. . .*

**PAVAROTTI:** I think that scene from the dramatic point of view, specially when Radames leaves the stage, and he faces the high priest, it becomes the strongest part, because then you see a woman try to send a man who she loves to death, and now she wants this man back, so strongly, it is another aspect of love, desperation, love in desperation. . .

**BRAGG:** *Verdi said that in the last scene of the opera, I'm quoting from him, that he wanted to eliminate the usual agony. He wrote: "I'd like something sweet, a very brief duet, a farewell to life." Can you tell us about that final duet?*

**PAVAROTTI:** The final duet demands a voice like mine, a very lyric voice, *molto duttile* elastic, and a lot of courage, to be able to make the pianissimo, the B flat, the last two B flats piano, like they are dying.

PAVAROTTI TALKS
'THE AIDA FILE'
FRIDAY AT 10·15PM

PAVAROTTI SINGS
VERDI'S 'AIDA'
SUNDAY AT 10 PM

LWT

MELVYN BRAGG PRESENTS TWO SOUTH BANK SHOW SPECIALS




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'sea of resentment' was born Islamic Jihad. When its leader, Mohammed Buli, was arrested and imprisoned by Sadat, 'his brother had the means to exact revenge'. Sadat's trip to Israel and the Camp David agreement that Jerusalem was to remain in Israeli hands 'signed his death warrant'.

Six years after Sadat's 'beautiful', 'poetic' assassination, little has changed on the surface of Cairo life; the casinos and discos proceed as before; boy meets girl, watched and envied by the multitudes; Islamic Jihad activists meet in back-street mosques, waiting for the day the president removes the food subsidy. Why is Islam the way forward? 'Because it is the only monotheistic faith that offers a political solution to the world . . . It controls every moment of our lives.' Outside the University of Cairo is a statue of a woman casting off the veil. Inside, they are busily putting it back on . . .

*Commercial break: Non-sting Soft and Gentle works hard to keep you dry. Soft and Gentle works hard as you play.*

The history of Islamic extremism in Lebanon is a more recent thing. In the early Eighties the Lebanese Shi'ites were still poor farming people living in the south of the country. They offered hospitality to the refugee Palestinians and were dragged into war with Israel for their pains. When they realised that the Palestinians had designs on their land, they welcomed the advancing Israelis with open arms and, in 1983, 14,000 PLO troops surrendered to the Israelis and went into exile in Syria. It was now that Israel made the disastrous decision to stay in Lebanon, the country that was to become its Vietnam.

The Shi'ite's equivalent to the Viet Cong were called Amal (Hope). By 1985 'the finest fighting machine in the world' had been beaten by these rifle-wielding farmers. Shi'ites poured into ruined Beirut and onto the streets came Amal, armed and financed from Iran. The extremist faction, responsible for taking Western hostages, including Terry Waite (because the West had backed Israel's 1982 invasion), is called Hizbollah. Their manifesto demands the total elimination of Israel and the conversion of the world to Islam. Their total commitment to this end is a terrifying prospect.

We have heard in fiery News Bulletins about these eager martyrs and suicide chauffeurs; to see them 'celebrating' the final day of 'Ashura', the anniversary of the Shi'ites' break with the better-off Sunis, their heads ritually cut open with a razor in memory of their murdered founder Immam Hussein, blood coursing down joyful, fanatical, mostly teenage faces, is to realise that these people are from another world to us, the next one perhaps, already shining in their eyes, to which death is the welcoming, glorious door.

The film couldn't have worked better as a piece of propaganda to terrify the world with the New Islam. There are currently 900 million Mohammedans in the world. Soon a quarter of the planet will be Muslim. Once the most tolerant of faiths, 600 years after the Crusades it is once more at war with the West, the word replaced by the sword.

'The West must realise before it is too late,' said a female American arabist, answering the crass statement of a US hawk, 'that this is a war which cannot be won. The only chance is rapprochement.' □

## WORK IN PROGRESS

# In our own backyards

**Naseem Khan**

FROM THE PHOTOGRAPH, there's not much going for the countryside round Leamington Spa: a mediocre bit of field; some undistinguished rural shacks. There would be justification for terming it — as the Council Structure Plan loftily dubs another area — 'of low visual amenity'.

Goodness knows how many of the landscapes that precipitated the 'creative maps' in the exhibition 'Knowing Your Place' are also of low visual amenity. Maybe quite a few. But it is that very quality, of being unspecial and everyday, that is the point of 'Knowing Your Place'. Common Ground, the environmental group which devised, organised and raised funds for the project, believes that too much time goes into caring for, agitating for and preserving the special — be it in the form of pandas, whales or rainforests. Instead, they say, we should be looking at our own backyards, realising the unacknowledged, humbler delights they contain and, second, our emotional ties to them.

What's more backyardish than one's immediate surroundings? Consequently, Common Ground asked a number of visual artists — chosen for diversity of approach, location and philosophies — to produce works that could roughly be called 'maps' and that recorded, in whatever medium the artists chose, landscapes that were important to them. Strictly speaking, the maps were supposed to relate to parishes (around 10,000 civil parishes still exist in England alone) but Common Ground defines a parish generously, letting it mean any valuable patch of ground, past or present. Artists could, for instance, go back to childhood, as Helen Chadwick did in her somnambulistic 'Littleheath Woods' or Roger Palmer in his elliptical 'Crabfat'.

At the same time as commissioning these private views, Common Ground set a grassroots campaign in motion, circulating local councils, WEAs and so on about the idea of making community maps. The response led to some engaging projects, at least 50 of which are known to Common Ground: a quilted contour map being made by a group of women from Redlynch near Salisbury; a painted series of maps in Buckland Newton.

There is, of course, no way in which making a community map could suddenly, magically, cure society's ills (any more than that could be achieved by putting a mural in a rundown estate) but it is arguable that any awareness of one's locality could decrease the likelihood of high-handed bureaucracy. 'Much of what is damaged and destroyed,' says Common Ground's practical guide to map-making, 'is the result of ignorance rather than wilful intention.'

By no means all the artists in the exhibition — at present in London's Ecology Centre, then on tour — would want to preserve the landscapes they have, in very diverse ways, recorded. Stephen Willatts' view from the top of Harvey House makes his feelings about urban impoverishment very clear. His picture has four black-and-white photographs radiating out from a centre: four views in four directions from the top of his tower block. Around them cut-out details are arrowed to their locations: beer bottle; condom; razor blade. Conrad Atkinson's 'Cleator Moor' is no more romantic in its view of Cumbria. It consists of eight small panels, each one having its natural images (earth, ferns, etc.) overlaid blisteringly with nuclear-jargon terminology: 'ALARP' ('as low as reasonably practicable'); 'permissible 5mSv'.

Anger isn't far from Tony Foster's 'A Granite Quarry in Luxulyan Valley', though you'd need to read the rubric to know that his lyrical wood — soft granite walls behind slim trees — was under consideration as a nuclear power site. Lyricism and wishful thinking are, of course, the potential banes of projects like this. And, being so utterly subjective, the results inevitably have, at times, a self-absorbed quality. Places tend to be empty, unpeopled — like Norman Ackroyd's 'Parish of Swinbrook with Widford' — because they are essentially the private province of the artist concerned.

The most satisfying and thought-provoking pieces are those that express a broad and contradictory response to place and experience. Helen Chadwick's lovely 'Littleheath Woods' has the large central figure of a tousled, sleeping girl surrounded by greenery and clutched at, in a topsy-turvy collage, by an array of small, nightmare, wood animals. Placed around are black-and-white photographs of notices ('. . . along this footpath is strictly PROHIBITED'), pylons, anonymous suburban semis.

Balraj Khanna's 'Real Centre of the Universe' also invites slow exploration. A large, playful oil, its central beige oval is crammed to bursting with the details of roads and events that make up the few square miles around Lord's Cricket Ground. Stylised squares mark Dwelling Units; a blue canal snakes under bridges; there are exhuberant shapes of people, faces, dogs and bits of written memories. ('Here a lady stopped me and said aren't I beautiful?'): a good-humoured jumble of city life, encounters and memories.

Ian Macdonald's 'Greatham Creek' is less optimistic. Based on a large painted map, it has the central blue creek creeping into actual pictures of creek life: birds, boats, industrial sky-line. Above all, there are the old, ramshackle houseboats, there for decades, and their owners, documented through stuck-on notes and photographs. Although less technically dexterous than other works in the exhibition, it carries a striking array of emotion — a sharp and passionate consciousness of change and a response to the melancholy beauty of it all. Given that Common Ground itself sprang out of the fact of a threatened world, it is an apt comment on the theme. □



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# Books

## BIOGRAPHY

## Lamb and falcon

**Michelene Wandor**

**Rebecca West: A Life**
VICTORIA GLENDINNING *Weidenfeld* £14.95

**Rebecca West: despising men yet desperately needing to depend on them**

MY FIRST INTRODUCTION to the writings of Rebecca West was through her updated book on spying, *The Meaning of Treason*, and her first novel, *The Return of the Soldier*. The former, with its tumbling, vivid prose, began with the trial of William Joyce (Lord Haw-Haw) in 1945, and ended with Kim Philby in the early 1960s; I emerged from its reading intrigued and infuriated. West dissected the complex anatomy of the spy, discussed the vexed question of national security (whose nation? whose security?) and was violently anti-Communist without ever trying to justify her arguments.

From the novel I emerged not very impressed; here was a story in which women competed with each other for a man and which ended with a silly and unnecessary gesture of female self-sacrifice. Very Mrs Humphry Ward, I thought, and not at all worthy of the reputation of a supposed feminist. Later, with the publication of Anthony West's novel *Heritage* and his biography of his father, H.G. Wells, painful evidence of a tortuous not-quite-ménage à trois emerged: at the age of 19, the young Rebecca met and was wooed by the successful, married H.G. Wells. Out of this semi-clandestine relationship Anthony was born, to adore his father and publicly blame his mother for his own unhappiness.

The extraordinary achievement of Victoria Glendinning's biography of Rebecca West is to anatomise a tempestuous character and explain her life in a way that begins to make sense of her many contradictory features: a woman who established herself as an outspoken feminist journalist while still in her teens, yet allowed herself to be shunted away from family and friends for the birth of her child. Rebecca West stayed with H.G. Wells for years after she should have broken free; Glendinning pinpoints her dilemma: '. . . she longed for men to be strong and supportive, while believing that they were generally inadequate and destructive.'

Here is the core problem for the bourgeois radical feminist (my analysis, not Glendinning's) who can simultaneously despise men and desperately need to depend on them. Such feminism cannot lead to an independence that exists in its own right and demands an equal relationship with men. When Rebecca West later married, it was to a man who soon stopped having sexual relations with her and, as she found out after his death, was an inveterate philanderer. However, her genuine need to control her own destiny enabled Rebecca West to become the incisive political journalist she undoubtedly was and also, perhaps, this very independence made it difficult for her to carry through her undoubted love for her son.

Glendinning, who knew Rebecca West, takes careful pains to show how much Anthony's public laundering of family relations hurt her, but she is also frank about Rebecca's wild, sharp, wickedly witty and always emotionally direct responses to personal and professional events. She is clearly on her subject's side, although sometimes she goes too far. She states, for example, that Rebecca was 'an honorary Jew' because so many of her friends were Jewish; quite apart from the sheer silliness of such a phrase, it jars with Rebecca's later assumptions that anti-Semitism was somehow a 'natural' response.

Glendinning claims that Rebecca West can be seen as a role model for 'radical, independent women' of the 20th-century. Good God, I hope not. Such a profoundly unsatisfactory personal life is certainly no useful role model for today's women.

And yet there is a sense in which Rebecca West stands as a reminder of the continuing need for the striving spirit of female independence. Glendinning makes the interesting point that Rebecca West reinvented her own life, people she knew and events that pained her. Of course, we all rewrite our lives as we go along to some extent and, while this reinvention may have helped West cope, it is also a salutary reminder that the security of women's place in our culture still needs to be assured by controversial, stroppy, prose-loving and opinionated women writers. Rebecca West certainly had all those qualities. □

## YOUNG ADULTS

## Wired up

**Adèle Geras**

THOSE OF YOU who are hotfooting it through the pages of your parents' *NS* making for the delights of the Competition or the Heartsearch column — stop. This review is addressed to you and your friends. Many publishers are spending a great deal of money working out exactly what you'd like in the way of reading matter and the latest new imprint is called 'Livewires' and comes from the Women's Press. These books are intended for today's young women, but that's no



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reason for young men not to read them.

The first four 'Livewire' books are bit of a mixed bunch. The best is a reissue of Kristin Hunter's novel about Harlem in the Sixties, **The Soul Brothers and Sister Lou** (£3.50). It's about Louretta, a brave and talented girl, her friends, family, house, school, dreams, disappointments and the final success of the music she and the brothers have managed to create in the face of poverty, hostility and police harrassment. By today's standards, even the violence seems almost innocent (not too much about drug abuse, for instance) but the story carries you along and, most importantly of all, Louretta and those around her are so real that you would recognise them if they walked by.

**You Worry Me, Tracey, You Really Do** by Angela Martin (£1.95) is also terrific. It's a collection of cartoons which say something funny or clever or both about everything you can think of. The drawings are of the scrawly kind that look easy to copy and are in fact impossible. I think everyone would like this book and, at the price, it would make a good gift for a parent with a lot to learn.

The other two 'Livewires' are less successful. **French Letters** (now there's a catchy title!) by Eileen Fairweather (£2.95) is for the younger ones among you. Maxine, who is in the Fourth Form and doesn't know what a French Letter is (can you believe that?) is writing to her friend who's moved up North. Through her letters we piece together her life and her worries about getting a boyfriend and losing weight and the impending visit of a dishy French boy. Without giving away the end of the story, I bet readers of magazines and romances will spot it coming a mile off. The tone is light, but Adrian Mole can rest on his laurels a while longer. Maxine Harrison is no competition. This book is pleasant enough, only it leaves you feeling unsatisfied, rather like eating a pastry that's more air than anything else.

**Push Me, Pull Me** by Sandra Chick (£2.95) is a serious and honest book about a young girl in a horrifying predicament, and it's a shame therefore that it isn't better as a novel. It's written in the first person in an irritating style that leaves out a lot of personal pronouns: 'Truth is, I get jealous of the fun everybody else is having. Only like the presents, just pretend to enjoy the rest. Can't stand pushing myself forward . . . makes me feel clumsy . . .' etc. Cathy, the narrator, is raped by her mother's lover on page five. It's Sandra Chick's intention to hit us with this before we have time to look round, but it's a mistake because we know so little about any of the characters at this stage that our reaction is one of disgust and anger, without the proper sympathy for Cathy. We are in the dark about almost every aspect of her life. The novel spares us very little and there are some memorable scenes, notably the description of Cathy's mother's wedding. Also, and although I know it's not what would happen in real life, I wish Bob could have got his just deserts. In *The Importance of Being Earnest* Oscar Wilde puts these words into the mouth of Miss Prism: 'The good end happily and the bad unhappily — that is what fiction means.' OK, I know it's more complicated than that, but still . . . This is Sandra Chick's first novel and it's courageous of her to try something so difficult. I can't say you'll enjoy it, but it will give you a great deal to discuss.

These are the first of the 'Livewire' titles with lots more to follow, including sf, history and writing by young women. I wish them luck.

There's not much space left for other books, but one of the best and a worthy successor to *The Chocolate War* is **Beyond the Chocolate War** by Robert Cormier (Fontana, £2.25). He's a writer who keeps you mesmerised until the last line. **Sixteen**, edited by Donald Gallo (Fontana, £1.95), brings together a bunch of good American stories. Even better British ones, written by some of the past winners of the *Guardian* Children's Fiction Prize, are collected by Stephanie Nettell into a beautiful volume called **Guardian Angels** (Viking Kestrel, £6.95). In **So Far To Go** (Deutsch, £6.50) Rhodri Jones has written a good, straight-up-and-down tale about a Glasgow boy whose family moves down to London. **An Ash-Blonde Witch** by Kenneth Lillington (Faber, £5.95) is fun — a mish-mash of fairy tale and sf, hard to understand at first, but very funny once you get the hang of it. Finally, the book that got to me was **Summers of the Wild Rose** by Rosemary Harris (Faber, £6.95). It's a marvellous love story full of sunlight, music and terrible heartache, set mainly in Austria in 1938. There's also a modern story deftly woven around the main narrative. I was sorry that it had to end. □

*Adèle Geras has written one of the stories in* More to Life than Mr Right, *stories for young feminists edited by Rosemary Stones and just published by Fontana at £1.75.*

## JOURNALISM

# Hack about

**Lesley Chamberlain**

**Seeing Red: Personal Encounters with Communism**
DAVID BONAVIA *Harrap* £9.95

THIS IS A BOOK for tyros in the Communist world, an avuncular series of briefings for those who have never confronted 'the system' in the professional capacity in which David Bonavia has for the past 20 years. It is largely the career autobiography of a Cambridge linguist who joined Reuters when the trainee test was to be able to rewrite a Bible story getting the news in the lead.

Gravitating to the Far East, by 1967 Bonavia was Vietnam correspondent for *The Times*, which provided a first brush with Communism in the form of many little men in black pyjamas threatening to infiltrate from Hanoi. Thereafter he was in Moscow, covering the hectic dissident period after *Ivan Denisovich* and before Helsinki, until he was expelled in 1972. A self-celebrating glutton for punishment he leapt at the chance to reopen the paper's Peking bureau later the same year. His wife Judy is given a few lines to speak in this testament, but one feels her patient presence on the long red road, and perhaps she was instrumental in the move to Hong Kong in 1976, where the Bonavias are still based.

Your correspondent is a nice man, not a great thinker but honest, law-abiding, fallible, and conscious of some of his limitations. Lies, injustice and cruelty do indeed make him see red and convince him all the more of the relative usefulness of his being a hack. He likes his job and his kind, whose benign routine of pen and slapstick is sometimes sorely tried by obfuscation and penal threats from Communist Foreign Ministries.

The best of this book is about the foreign correspondent who is really only another outraged correspondent to the letters page, but particularly outraged by Communist iniquities and prepared to wrestle for the right words to find his way past the foreign editor. The worst is the material that has been dug up and recycled to animate his past career, yesterday's colour stories, feature trips, sidebars and much from your correspondent's diary, like what happened to Khrushchev in China when he drank too much green tea and where the lovelies from Zaire accompanying President Mobuto wore five pictures apiece of their much loved leader when they attended his Peking reception. The fate of the book of the newspaper is that the anecdotes and jokes no longer speak for themselves. The writing is flat, the approach unimaginative and I'm still puzzling over what the maid said when Bonavia's Moscow driver Igor put a pink toilet seat over his head and cried television.

As a serious account of Communism this book is too anecdotal, too long on words and short on psychology to be helpful to anyone who wants more than a dinner-party line. Bonavia's first-hand Sino-Soviet experience is much padded out with potted history and second-hand reflections based on other people's news stories; it also excludes the whole of Eastern Europe, arguably that part of the world where the strengths and deficiencies of the system are most subtly and variously manifest. The gap also leads to the inaccurate statement that the Eastern European states have mustered no anti-nuclear movements, and to a shamefully bitty and out-of-date few pages given the misleading title 'The Romanian Way'.

Our man in the big Communist cities is also rather touchingly disoriented when he gets out into open spaces. On a trip to pro-Soviet Outer Mongolia he gets carried away:

> In our advanced countries, even in the deep rural areas, we seldom have the chance actually to *listen* to silence. It is an extraordinary experience, more resting and refreshing than any I know.

Isn't it nice to hear someone praising Mongolia? Most hacks would have us believe life in Ulan Bator is punitive. But the writing is dreadfully feeble when put in a book, and looks riddled with prejudice when nearby we find him dismissing *Russian* mushrooming and skiing as the nature worship of peasants. Bonavia is far removed from the new wave of reborn literary traveller and his concluding 'Hack's Creed' is suitably diffuse. He creates his most readable product when exercising Reuter-style racy irreverence on cultures that make him faintly unhappy.

When the handover of Hong Kong to Peking comes in 1997, though, it will be his story — if he is still there. Because, besides sending the news, he will be adept at breakfasting us off the many platesful of ideological inconsistency, linguistic and cultural misunderstanding and bureaucratic entanglement which occur when Communism and Western democracy infuriatingly and hilariously sit at the same table. His editor should be most grateful. □



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POETRY

# London airs

**John Lucas**

**Consolations**
ROY FULLER *Secker* £5.95
**Homing**
JOHN MOLE *Secker* £5.95
**Presences: New & Selected Poems**
P. J. KAVANAGH *Chatto* £4.95
**Poems 1956-1986**
JAMES SIMMONS *Bloodaxe* £5.95

IN 'HOMAGE TO Jaroslav Seifert', one of the poems in his very enjoyable new collection, Roy Fuller asks himself 'Why shouldn't London stun like Prague?' He then decides that 'It does; and memories of skin/And fragrancies could match the Czech's/If told with equal craft.' This is to empty cities of their histories, to imply that relationships exist out of time and place.

> The 53 glances off
> Parliament Square, and leaves behind
> Statues and devious rulers, bound
> For my study's suburban heights.

Good that a London bus can steer the poet away from those unwelcome reminders of political nastiness. 'Devious rulers' seems mild enough, but is perhaps more exactly severe than Pound's 'liars in public places' and Fuller's sly Horatianism has its own demure insistencies. His study's suburban heights cannot make him as grandly aloof as Montaigne in his tower yet it undoubtedly allows him private space. And this surely is why London cannot stun like Prague. How can you begin sensibly to compare Czechoslavakia's anguished history with the record of what Henry James called England's 'long, safe centuries'? And isn't it intolerably smug even to attempt the comparison?

Yes and no. Over a long career Roy Fuller has increasingly moved towards the margins of history, has cultivated private graces and in the process has, I think, wanted to free his work, and his sense of what is tolerable to the imagination, from pressures and presences that threaten its hoped-for autonomy. He would breath amen to Leopold Bloom's protest that 'it's no use . . . force, hatred, history, all that. That's not life for men and women, insult and hatred'. But English history is very different from Irish history, in part because the English wished on Ireland and others that nightmare from which Bloom, like Dedalus, is trying to awake. Should an English writer, then, be prepared so easily to shed the burden of history, of 'Statues and devious rulers'? What makes an answer to this surprisingly difficult is what makes **Consolations** so valuable. It's neither an evasive nor a smug volume, and that it isn't has a good deal to do with its ample grace of manner. This is more than a matter of technical aplomb, although Fuller's assurance is such that in 'The Marcellus Version' he can even chide Shakespeare because 'in mid-career/He didn't always get the ictus right'. More important is the quotation from James in 'New Year's Eve: Midnight' where Fuller remarks on James' 'notebook habit "to catch/And keep something of life"' — words which would have been a fitting epigraph for this volume.

For *Consolations* is full of James' 'gaping habit' and what makes Fuller's consolations as valuable to us as to him is that in them observation is invariably controlled by astringent wit: 'The room is lit, the vermouth's oil revolves/Beneath the ice according to some law/That might rule daring currents of the mind.' The poem from which these lines come is called 'Great Events' and the particular great event recorded towards the poem's close turns out to be the 'shock of meeting/Light-fleeing earwigs'. Well, why not? As Camus' Rieux says, 'It's too damn silly, living only in and for the plague.' Seifert of course has far more reason than Fuller to invoke Rieux's words, but this doesn't mean that they have to be unavailable to an English poet, especially one aware, as Fuller must be, of approaching death — although he is typically wry about that, noting that 'even in mourning mornings will go on'.

Death has more than a walk-on part in **Homing**. There are, for example, elegies on the jazzmen Pee-Wee Russell and Ben Webster, the latter of which is particularly fine and prompts the thought that over the years Mole has written enough good poems about jazz and its exponents to suggest that an enterprising publisher ought to bring them together. There is figurative death — of love, of marriage — in 'The Doll's House', a typically mordant fable poem about the ritualising of words inside a relationship: 'After tonight/We shall probably find them./If not,/They have lived with us long enough/To find their own way back.' And in 'Coming Home', which *New Statesman* readers will vividly remember from its first appearance in these pages (*NS* 19/26 December 1986), Mole has produced a poem whose technical brilliance properly serves its stark, horrifying subject-matter: a loved child who grows up to become a soldier and who in the course of duty kills a loved child. This is the nightmare of history from which it is impossible fully to awake, so that an English poet, remote from events the poem describes, nevertheless registers how they impinge on his consciousness.

> And that's the reason why this can't go on,
> And why it's almost culpable to write,
> And why I can't stop thinking of our son
> And of how easily we sleep at night,
> How in the house if anybody screams
> We joke next morning. It was only dreams.

By tearing this stanza out of the poem I've disrupted the careful logic with which Mole builds up an awareness of how we are part of a world from which evil will not go away. I haven't, I hope, falsified its extraordinary power.

Mole is a gifted comic writer, as 'From Doctor Watson's Casebook' shows. Yet the gift does not lapse into cosiness. 'The Song of the Pie' sings ominously about the kind of Thatcherite Britain where we are all expected to conform: 'But why should you make such a fuss/When we promise that things will go well?/All the best eggs vote for us./They know it's the truth we tell.' I think of Gavin Ewart as an admirer of this poem, as I'm sure Graves would have admired 'The Doll's House' and Auden seen much to praise in 'Coming Home'. These names are not invoked out of random pretentiousness, but in order to give a sense of Mole's achievement, and in the angry knowledge that Secker & Warburg have announced their intention of dropping him from their already pitifully short poetry list. This is another way in which London can't be compared with Prague — or with any other capital city, come to that. For where else in the world would you find publishers guilty of such crass philistinism, such blatant stupidity?

There's just space to welcome two handsome Selecteds: P. J. Kavanagh's **Presences** and James Simmons' **Poems 1956-1986**. Kavanagh is something of a cisatlantic Randall Jarrell, his poems a blend of the conversational, the ruminative, and a sometimes melancholic wit. But he has a sharper sense of when to end a poem and his best work — which includes some of the most recent — has about it a resilient sweetness of spirit that makes him a most cherishable poet. Simmons hasn't that sweetness, though he can be a softie. He can also be decidedly sour, or so you feel, reading through his lifetime's accounts of bed, booze and board. But he puts to good use his 'Tough reasonableness and lyric grace/together, in poor man's dialect,' defending mates of his from those apostles of culture who would dismiss them as hollow; and although you can't imagine him ever living on suburban heights his best poems genuinely freshen an appetite for the days in which we live. □


○ A French spy penetrates a top Soviet espionage ring – and is found dead in the Alps . . .

○ An eccentric Californian invents a high-tech mirror– and ends up selling one of America's best-kept secrets to Moscow . . .

FICTION?




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FICTION

# Sound of the city

**Alison Fell**

**Greyhound for Breakfast**
JAMES KELMAN *Secker* £10.95

IN THIS COLLECTION of stories from 1972 to the present (four of them originally published in the *NS*), James Kelman homes in mercilessly on the tenements, hostels and DHSS offices of a Glasgow for the most part unemployed and used to it. From single killer paragraphs to longer, rambling tales of everyday inertia, Kelman catches the resilience of a class in the wit and spirit of the language.

Faced with the Scottish writer's perennial dilemma of standard English versus dialect, Kelman refuses to split himself off from his characters' language even as third-person narrator, and this is both his strength and his limitation. What he excels at is the baleful interior monologue: in the wretchedly funny 'Where but What' a working-class patriarch stokes a vast and inarticulate grudge against the ex-wife who failed to treat him with all due slavishness and, worse, nagged him for looking at lassies in mini-skirts. He's also nursing a vast need to go to the toilet but he's too angry and idle to satisfy it. Beat that for masochism.

For the citizens of Kelman's Scotland, days dawdle past punctuated by small pleasures — the booze, the cards, the dogs — and irritations — the po-faced clerks at the Broo, the 'fucking wind that smokes your fucking fags'. These characters are virtuosos of abuse, hiding their tender parts behind great, irresistible explosions of swearwords. (You roll them around in your mouth for days. Imagine calling somebody an 'elitist wee shite'. Scottish aggro dies hard.) When there is love or tenderness — as in 'The Wean and That' and 'Forgetting to Mention Allende', it's generally offstage and belongs to the wife out at work in the supermarket or the daughter who'll be home from school soon needing her dinner cooked.

Even in the longer stories very little happens, and most of that is random. In 'Home for a Couple of Days' expatriate Eddie intends to visit his mother bearing gifts, but instead fritters his money away on vodkas for his unemployed mates and never gets there; in 'Half an Hour Before he Died' an old man becomes finally incensed by the noise of the main road he's lived beside all his life without complaint.

There are other stories which make more than one nod in Beckett's direction — 'The One with the Dog', for instance, whose truculent narrator is determined to uphold codes of etiquette among his fellow dossers, or 'An Old Story', wherein the teller of the tale is too depressed by what happened to the depressed girl to tell it. But Kelman is both angrier and funnier than Beckett, and his intentions are more specific.

If plot is minimal, so is characer development, but then this is hardly Jane Austen country and Kelman is less concerned with individual heroes and their epiphanies than with a mass of people just about getting by. Like his refusal of the narrator's privilege of standard English, this may be a democratic project, but to me it's also a slightly claustrophobic and self-denying one, for I can't help feeling that to do justice to working-class Scotland writers need all the privileges and freedoms they can get. After all, Kelman's contemporary Alasdair Gray, another technician of dialect, has used all manner of fantastic, surrealistic and English narrations to explore inner life in the Scottish inner city, and he's no class traitor, either.

But if I shy away from the nose-grinding reality of it all, maybe it's just the rural Scot in me whimpering for a bit of sky and distance, for the closest Kelman lets us get to nature is a sooty park with alkies, and a sudden spring bird singing: 'D d d dooie. D d d dooie. Wee fucking bird. Its wee fucking heart and soul.' Really though, you've got to hand it to him. □

*James Kelman and Tom Leonard will be reading at Battersea Arts Centre on 10 May at 8pm, in the first of a series of discussions and readings, 'Word of Mouth', sponsored by the* New Statesman. *Phone the box office on 01-223 8413 for details both of the Kelman/Leonard reading and of subsequent events.*

## FOOTNOTES

The first ever European conference for **lesbian and gay writers** is happening this weekend at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

Martyn Goff of the Book Trust will launch the event at 10am on Saturday 18 April and, over the ensuing three days, there'll be sessions on Aids and the Writer, Censorship, Publishers and Critics, Screen Images, Poetry, SF, Translation, Theatre and more — including a forum to discuss the reply of French novelist Yves Navarre when invited to attend the conference: 'I am a writer; I am gay; I am not a gay writer; sorry.'

Among those who've *accepted* to speak at 'Symposium 87' are Edmund White, Derek Jarman, Jeremy Seabrook, Gillian Hanscombe, Adam Mars-Jones, Tom Wakefield, Martin Sherman, Edward Lucie Smith, David Rees and Wendy Martin. If those names — from the ones most likely to be familiar to the British reader — imply that the conference is a boys' own affair, it should be added that there are a number of women-only sessions planned: on Lesbian Erotica (Is It Pornography?), Creative Writing and Motherhood, Lesbian Poetry, etc. Also, that it is British insularity which makes the names of the continental guests unlikely to ring a bell — a situation which the conference's final session hopes to rectify by exploring the chances of making the Symposium an annual, international event.

Starting times for this one are 10am on Saturday, 11am on Sunday and 10am on Monday. For further details ring Peter Robins on 01-735 4246.

**HSG**

FICTION

# Worn-out blade

**Oliver Harris**

**Cuts**
MALCOLM BRADBURY *Hutchinson* £6.95

WHEN MALCOLM BRADBURY looked back in the mid-1970s on his first novel, *Eating People is Wrong*, he saw the anachronism of his 'liberal comedy', recognising that the comic form now 'needs to become a more precise, more economical, a harder instrument'. The surgical imagery of his new novella, *Cuts*, promises hard-hitting, incisive wit to fulfil this requirement for sharper tools in a world where the treatment of everything, the truth included, has become increasingly harsh and economical. Disappointingly, *Cuts* turns out to be a protracted tour de force of whimsy, Bradbury's satiric scalpel having all the cutting edge of a pair of blunt and rusty nail-scissors.

Set in the summer of 1986, with Thatcher's Britain performing 'a kind of national hara-kiri', the book dramatises an intersection of financial cuts on the university campus and editorial cuts in celluloid. These economies and liberties connect through the academic and media careers pursued by unknown author and Morris Traveller driver, Henry Babbacombe. Commissioned by Eldorado Television to write a blockbuster series called 'Serious Damage', Babbacombe airs doubts about his script's lack of aesthetic teeth: 'I feel it could be missing something . . . Some element of experimentalism, some sense of surprise, some . . . difference.' Not only could the same easily be said of Bradbury's novella, but perhaps Babbacombe also realises the ironic appropriateness of their works' titles, since he inhabits a comic-strip reality where nothing is serious enough to suffer damage, or fleshed-out enough to feel the bite.

That no blood should flow from Bradbury's *Cuts* suggest the limits of the man who 'has his pulse on the finger of contemporary society'. That account of his ironic role was made some 20 years ago in *All Dressed Up and Nowhere to Go*: 'I was,' wrote Bradbury, the essayist of phogeydom, 'not an angry young man . . . But I was a niggling one, an uneasy figure struggling in my Englishness, fighting to get out.' As retrospective self-descriptions go, the image of Bradbury the niggling victim in sporting jackets fits suitably. For he has always been at his best when engaging the absurdities of liberalism at its historical turning points, each of his novels deliberately addressed to its respective decade.

Following *Rates of Exchange* (1983), *Cuts* seems intended as a mid-decade update. Accordingly it records news headlines on Chernobyl, Aids and all the other topical crises that test the mettle of Englishness. But the same struggle to escape the national character that made Bradbury contempory in the 1960s leaves him out of step now; his passéist formula that 'it is better to



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live in the past than to live nowhere at all' has itself become passé, pre- rather than post-modern. Underneath the journalistic bulletins that punctuate the story, behind Bradbury's latest in literary in-jokes (lisping references to 'Woland Barthes', etc) moves an uneasy conservative spirit. The comedy of *Cuts* is reactionary, recycling once-funny jokes into stereotypes and exploiting the stock figures of English humour at its most hackneyed — the common cleaning lady with her silly malapropisms, the funny speech habits of those funny foreigners, the dozing Lords, bombastic theatrical Knights and randy women sporting unlikely names.

Overworking such gags and belabouring the verbal play on its title with tiresome éclat *Cuts* descends at times to shere puerlity. When the Vice Chancellor of Babbacombe's university plans to privatise its posts to include 'the Durex Chair of French Letters', it isn't even undergraduate laughter, but the smutty giggles of schoolchildren that is solicited. It is as if Bradbury the traditional novelist must now fight to escape Bradbury the modern critic not only by undercutting the values of enlightened liberalism and sophisticated academe, but also by parodying the bankcruptcy of fiction itself.

The leading actor in Babbacombe's doomed serial sings its praises: 'A completely untalented piece of hackery, a purley mechanical artefact without any quality or substance.' Demurring at the possibility of ironic distance between Babbacombe's script and Bradbury's novella, the joke, it appears, is on us.

Slow to start and quick to finish, the plot collapses in a premature ejaculation (Babbacombe had confessed his difficulty with climaxes) when, after the death — in between the sheets — of its leading actor, the TV series is 'well, not to put too fine a point on it, cut'. It is, to be blunt, the kindest cut of all. □

## CRIME

# All in the past

**Nick Kimberley**

RUTH RENDELL, writing as Barbara Vine, begins her lastest novel, **A Fatal Inversion** (Viking, £10.95), with the discovery of a body on the gun-room floor. Contrary to expectation, it isn't that of a well-heeled artisto, but of an old dog — this is a sly wink at the rigid tradition of country house murders which is so important to British crime fiction, but which Rendell leaves far behind.

Both Barbara Vine novels concern crimes committed long ago: the phrase 'in the far' resonates throughout the first, *A Dark-Adapted Eye*, now in paperback (Penguin, £2.95). Rendell re-creates the past so fastidiously that the present becomes a dying echo of 'the far'. Hairstyles, dress lengths, perfumes, flowers: every tiny detail permeates the fabric of memory.

What sets both novels in motion is a guilt born of violence, bending present lives out of shape. There are numerous asides on the state of grace from which the characters have fallen: two are named Adam and Eden; *A Fatal Inversion* makes specific reference to the Garden of Eden, *A Dark-Adapted Eye* to the reappearance of the Mark of Cain. But these aren't so much precise allegorical motifs as fleetingly glimpsed signs. Rendell's concerns are entirely secular. *A Dark-Adapted Eye* establishes that the central villainy lies, not with individual characters, but in the tangled structure of family life. 'The terrible pressure of love' leads people to desperation, but those pressures have little place in *A Fatal Inversion*, where people are barely able to establish links with each other — love and affection are turned inwards. Therein lies the novel's only weakness: there's little of the compassion so important for a humanist like Rendell.

Her world-view may be humanist, but it's hardly optimistic. A dark-adapted eye is one which has adjusted to darkness — like Rendell's own, so focused on gloom that she sees little else. That's no condemnation: crime fiction demands such morbidity. This country has no novelist better than Rendell at suggesting the unpleasantnesses just below civilised surfaces.

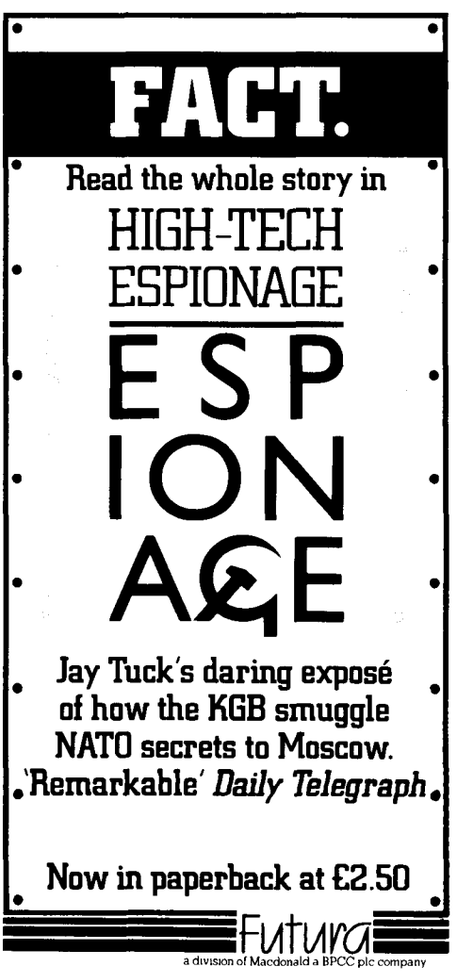
For the characters in Elmore Leonard's fiction, the past is simply what has brought them here. They need all their faculties to cope with the moment they're passing through. His latest novel, **Bandits** (Viking, £10.95), details a plan to seize money donated to the Nicaraguan Contras and divert it towards the side of right. Bearing in mind that Leonard wrote this long before Irangate, it's a bold theme for popular fiction to handle; America's backyard has been dumped untidily in front of the picture window — but Leonard never loses track of the fact that, messy though that may be for Americans, the consequences are greater for Nicaragua.

Always bold in generic terms, Leonard has no qualms about placing two strong-willed women at the centre of his machinations. One of them, an ex-nun, sums up her life in terms similar to those by which American tough-guy fiction has lived for 50 years. At this point, Leonard, usually the most materialist of crime writers, intones an almost mystical creed for his characters: 'If you need nothing, you have everything' — 'if you go ahead with it, if you *do* it . . . that's something else.' Time once again to send that man through the door with a gun in his hand. This is a skilful and ambitious thriller which somehow never induces the edginess of this writer's best.

Charles Willeford's *Miami Blues* (Futura, £1.95), published in 1985, did a fine job in recreating Leonard's ironic approach to violence and paranoia. Willeford is too good a writer to be connected with imitation. His latest, **New Hope for the Dead** (Futura, £2.50) takes the same central character, homicide cop Hoke Moseley, and the same location, Miami, but develops more as character portrayal than as novel of violence. This is a shame — mainstream fiction is overburdened with character studies, crime fiction's strengths are elsewhere — but Willeford manages the job well. Hoke is as flawed a hero as you could wish for — false teeth at 42, a pedant and, as one of his antagonists says, a patronising, slimy sonofabitch. His life is a shambles, not only because of Miami copdom, but also because of the presence of women: his 'little suite was no longer a sanctuary; it was full of females with unsolved problems.'

Willeford's greatest achievement is to show us Miami in turmoil, suffering from 'white flight' as those with money hightail it away from those without, who aren't averse to a little mayhem of their own to redistribute the balance of power. From the safe distance of London, we have to turn to crime fiction for a real sense of America at street level.

Both Leonard and Willeford suggests that, for the modern thriller, disruption threatens not only in the form of violence, but in the twinned 'alienness' of women and blacks — in *Bandits*, the latter are represented by a dispossessed Miskito Indian, in *New Hope for the Dead* by Miami's cross-cultural mix. In Robert B. Parker's **A Catskill Eagle** (Penguin, £2.95), the response to these alien presences is nearly psychotic. Private eye Spenser sets out to rescue his girlfriend from the clutches of an evil rich man and, because he can't tackle the situation on his own, he takes along his black buddy, Hawk — a man whose moral universe is impenetrable. The bonds of respect and affection between Spenser and Hawk are at least as important as those between Spenser and girlfriend; but Parker seems able to establish those bonds only in terms that, for all his references to feminism and racism, are hopelessly unbalanced. The three only relate to each other through the violence to which Spenser's possessiveness leads him. Things simmer down a little in Parker's **Taming a Sea-Horse** (Viking, £9.95) but Spenser still seems a figure self-consciously dredged from the past and, despite Parker's evident skill, incapable of coping with the modern world. □





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## British capitalism and socialism

*Phil Wright, Lecturer in Economics, Dept of Continuing Education, University of Sheffield*
'Does socialism have a future?' made me reach for *Fortune* magazine, the *Financial Times* annual survey of European companies and the most recent Report and Accounts from the Bank for International Settlements. This perhaps strange behaviour was prompted by the total absence in the long discussions of anything other than highly sketchy references to the economic nature of the beast which may or may not have a socialist future. But why these particular publications?

*Fortune* magazine's annual survey of the world's largest industrial corporations tells us that two of the world's top ten in 1985 were British, the rest were American. These two (BP and Shell, the latter being half Dutch) had a combined turnover equivalent to about 30 per cent of the GDP of the British economy. Britain had two further entries in the top 50, West Germany had six in total but the combined turnover of West Germany's complement was by far exceeded by that of the British entries in the world's big league.

Turning to the European scene, the *Financial Times* annual survey tells us that British companies completely dominated the European top 500. In 1986 Britain had 19 companies in the top 50 and the market capitalisation of its entrants in the 500 came to $338 billion. Its nearest rival was West Germany with $160 billion, while France could only manage $53 billion. Britain also had 11 entries in the top 25 European employers and together they employed approaching two million people.

The Report and Accounts of the Bank for International Settlements demonstrates just how far ahead Britain is as the home of the world's largest financial centre. In 1985 banks in Britain had external assets valued at $552 billion, exceeding those of banks in the United States by over $100 billion and completely dwarfing the activities of other European countries in this domain. (West Germany managed $97 billion.) And this is only the banks — there are insurance companies, pension funds and other financial institutions as well.

These structural highlights of British economic activity demonstrate that while segments of the British economy and society may have been devastated during the past seven years, British capitalism is thriving and has no need of 'regeneration' (whatever that means). If not the most powerful, it is certainly the most internationalised outside the United States. In turn, and quite apart from the impact which falling oil production might or might not have, this has now made the British balance of payments extremely vulnerable to the whims of international capital: even small percentage changes in the inward and outward flows of interest, profits and dividends (£53 billion in and £50 billion out in 1985) or on capital account could immediately cause massive balance of payments deficits.

Still essentially preoccupied with redistributing income or with abstract propositions, the British social democratic tradition has yet to address a serious political response to these current realities of British capitalism. Until it does so it can only aspire to being a mild echo of Toryism.

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## Britain's bantustan

*Jackson Kennedy, Whiteabbey, Co. Antrim*
I agree with Martha Osamor (*NS* 3 April) that black people in Britain and the Northern Irish do have something in common. Both are treated as second-class citizens and both are used and abused by the authorities. There is one area, however, where we radically differ. Black people living in England, Scotland and Wales have the opportunity of overcoming their oppression by joining, influencing and voting for a political party, whereas we in Northern Ireland (black, white and Chinese) are not allowed to join or vote for or against the Labour or Tory parties. We, therefore, have no control or influence over the government. We Northern Irish are forced to live in Britain's bantustan.

## Double talk

*Mary Kaldor, Science Policy Research Unit, University of Sussex, Brighton*
Mr Renton's reply to my article (Letters 13 March) is a wonderful example of the way in which the government reinterprets 'facts' to suit its position.

He will remember that European systems were excluded from the SALT agreements and this was why Helmut Schmidt pleaded for arms control talks in Europe in his famous 1977 lecture. (Incidentally, he did not in that lecture request new American systems for Europe.) Had arms control negotiations begun earlier, it might have been possible to avoid *both* the SS-20 build-up and the painful debate about cruise and Pershing missiles.

The peace movement never argued that the 'zero option' was 'unfair on the Soviet Union'. We argued that it was not a serious negotiating position because it would never be accepted by the Russians; at that time, the Soviet Union was still insisting on numerical parity. Nevertheless, we urged the Russians to dismantle SS-20 missiles unilaterally and/or to accept the Western 'zero option'. Under Gorbachev, the Soviet Union has abandoned the insistence on numerical parity and this is why an agreement is now possible, *not* because the West has negotiated from strength.

The peace movement has always favoured multilateral agreements and argued that unilateralism helps multilateralism. If both sides insist on negotiating from strength, no agreement is possible. If we are concerned to sustain and encourage a multilateral disarmament process, then unilateral or independent initiatives on *both* sides of the kind proposed by the Labour Party would be helpful.

I love Mr Renton's bureaucratic double-talk: 'the only way of achieving security at lower levels of weaponry is by demonstrating the determination to maintain one's security at whatever level is necessary?' Whatever is that?

*E. H. Wood, Okehampton, Devon*
The Soviet Union was not, as Tim Renton suggests, driven to the negotiating table by the strength of the Western response to SS20s. On the contrary, they screwed up the quantity of nuclear hardware even further by replying to cruise and Pershings with SS12s, 21s and 23s, some of them for the first time in Czechoslovakia and East Germany. The 'zero option', as Denis Healey has pointed out, was first put forward by him and Michael Foot, and it's a matter of indifference who's claimed it since if it's now been adopted as a genuine objective by the superpowers.

What is abundantly clear is that the supreme triviality of a mind that can seriously claim 'the only contribution of the "peace movement" (his apostrophes) has been to delay progress on the zero option by encouraging the Soviet Union . . .' is plainly incapable of encompassing rational argument about the past.

## For the record

*Sir Cecil Clothier, KCB QC, Chairman, Police Complaints Authority*
The allegation (*NS* 27 March) that we were party to or connived at the release of statements taken for the purposes of an inquiry under our supervision to police forces for use on their behalf in other proceedings is untrue. Some statements taken for the purposes of investigating a complaint were indeed produced by counsel for the Metropolitan Police at the inquest on Mrs Cynthia Jarrett. We then and there issued a press release deploring this event and denying responsibility for it.

The only occasions on which statements have been released from our files with our consent have been two instances when we sent not to the police but to either the prosecuting or the defending solicitors, statements tending to exonerate defendants. We believed that the paramount interests of justice in criminal proceedings demanded no less and I am pleased to say that the desired effect was obtained in each case. The client of Mr Lizar (who I believe is one and the same as Mr Lazare in your article) was not proceeded against further.

On another occasion we brought to the attention of the Crown Prosecution Service evidence which cast doubt on the validity of charges against a former print-worker who had been arrested at Wapping. As a result the charges were dropped.



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## The future of socialism

I read 'Does socialism have a future?' (*NS* 6 March) with enormous interest. It reminded me (with a large qualification) of Mikhail Gorbachev's address to the 23rd Party Congress, provided free in my Moscow hotel room. Forced into patience, in the lonely abstraction of a foreign hotel, I read on enough to discover he was a man describing exactly the same problem we all face, but in a language so profoundly shifted by another answer to a different problem that the task was difficult. The qualification is that Mikhail Gorbachev is more clear than any of the writers in your symposium about the problem he is facing. The word he uses, again and again, is 'stagnation'.

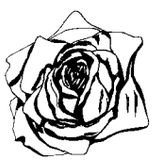
The first problem for socialists, as it is for Mikhail Gorbachev, ought to be poverty, a word never used in your series of articles. Poverty in Britain in the twentieth century is a comparative problem, and experienced here in a poignant form, a combination of misery for some, and for others a sense of loss, a diminution of our scope, an alienation from the future. Most people know that this is caused by poor economic performance. But few socialists acknowledge, as Peter Kellner does, that 'most of the pleasures of life that have become available in the last 40 years have been provided by the private sector: cars, foreign holidays, television sets, frozen food, and so on'. Is it not possible for socialists to own up that you achieve more for the poor by getting a one per cent increase in the gross national product than by all the social measures in the manifesto?

Such truths imply a certain poise and a tolerance of complexity. Some of your writers had it. Some didn't. Julian LeGrand did. It was refreshing to read that 'traditional liberalism locates power firmly in the hands of the individual consumer'. It you deem it impossible, intellectually, to define what the 'community interest' is, the interests of the individual consumer generalised across millions is the nearest thing to it. The interests of the capitalist or the labour union or any other interest group certainly isn't it. (We've seen how that late '70s litany of 'blacks, women and trade unionists' merely provides a platform for a succession of ambitious policy professionals.)

Julian LeGrand has a reservation. Liberalism 'puts people's livelihoods in their savings at the mercy of consumer taste and fashion'. That's certainly worth thinking about. LeGrand is one of the many writers who pay court to the market, noting that 'competitive markets tend to encourage innovation', disperse economic power, provide people with a range of others with whom they can deal and are race-and-gender blind. Above all, by co-ordinating the activities of millions of individuals they achieve something that 'a planning process properly democratic in conception and execution and applying to a complex economy would quite simply never finish.' All these are points that other socialists in the British tradition should support, yet we still hear groans about 'the market'.

Paul Hirst adopts this position and then writes, presumably referring to Hayek, that 'most right-wing theorists are intellectually banal'. He also uses expressions like 'publicist' and 'client intellectual'. The old tradition of left-wing insult leads him to slag off the very people whose ideas he has adopted.

This new perception of what a market is would seem to lie at the heart of the new socialism, in the West and in the East. What presumably will distinguish socialists from liberals in the new world that will come to pass when shibboleths die is the extent to which societies impose equality on their citizens. Robert Nozick gives, in his book *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, an illustrative example which I shall adapt. Diego Maradona, the Argentinian football star, offers to play for Tottenham Hotspur. Spurs fans willingly allow him to surcharge each ticket by 10 pence and keep the money. Maradona comes to White Hart Lane. The decision has been reached freely, but has disturbed the balance of equality. If the state now surtaxes Maradona's earnings, he may well go to Real Madrid. The 'freedom' of Spurs supporters to see the play they wanted is diminished.



The point is that it is impossible to impose equality without limiting the freedom of others. The 'others' whose freedom you limit are not just the rich and powerful, but perfectly ordinary people. That doesn't necessarily mean you don't take steps towards equality in a modern society. It merely means it has to be done with intelligence and reserve, in full knowledge of this limiting condition.

The same applies to social policies designed to achieve equality. One of the disappointments of your series is the lack of reference to what seemed to me the key contemporary arguments. Hayek was mentioned but he is a very old man. Von Mises is long dead. People who want to win arguments ought to know Thomas Sowell's brilliant and controversial work on race and inequality, Becker's work on human capital, Murray's work on the Great Society programme, George Gilder's work on the entrepreneur and Peter Bauer's work on development aid. They should ponder the controversial claim of Irving Kristol who argues that although a liberal society creates the maximum freedom, it undermines those values that are needed to frame the social space in which our freedoms can be enjoyed. Some liberals argue that the rule of law, secured by a liberal constitution, is enough. Conservatives, like Kristol, argue that higher sanctions are necessary. Kristol links in to the crisis of socialism.

Old-fashioned socialism was able to assert a socialist society in which common ownership of the means of production simply eliminated greed and competition. We now know that it does neither of those things. An imposition of moral values at the heart of the economic structure does not perpetuate the values it asserts. The conservative socialist used to believe society can be moralised either by educating people to be good or by eliminating the bad. (The 'bad' have always provided a chance for vivid enumeration in socialist literature, modulating today into 'the New Right', capitalists, City financiers, and the list of the bad and the ugly that peppers Sarah Benton's vexed article.)

What some socialists have in common with conservatives is that conservatives rely on religion, or 'discipline' (rather than education or elimination) to protect the 'morality' of the system. And, indeed, our society still has a huge appetite for the kind of decent paternalism reflected in the public utterances of the Royal Family. Liberals today have a tough time with the moral issue. We accept that there is no standard of morality which is absolute, but that societies somehow have to hold the line between anarchy and the Grand Inquisition. In the modern world morality is personal.

The word 'freedom' often appeared. People cannot be said to be 'free' where economic circumstances prevent them from doing things that they can see to be easily obtainable by luckier people in the same society. Raymond Plant defines it as a notion of 'executive agency', a notion which I find useful. But I found little acknowledgement of the real difficulties that lie in this area. 'Negative rights' define the things that other people can't do to you. 'Positive rights' define things that the rest of the community is obliged to do for you. A positive right, however defined, is a compulsory transfer from one citizen to another. Where do we draw the line? Is a good education a positive right? How good? A foreign holiday is highly educational. As one or two of the writers acknowledge, a modern socialist society may accept a relatively high degree of inequality. But how much?

A paradox about public opinion is that our society firmly supports the notion of 'positive rights'. Why then do people not vote in socialist or social democratic parties? One reason is that voters do not have the confidence that socialist or social democratic parties know where these positive rights end. The voters fear that such parties will interfere too much and in the wrong ways. Interference is what today's citizen loathes more than anything. He/she may therefore vote for parties who are opposed to the extension of positive rights to check further interference. This means that socialist parties will not get re-elected to office until they redefine and clarify these issues.

The Labour Party fails to do that. It is clear from Roy Hattersley's piece that his socialism has a role in an 'unequal society.' It stops the rich and powerful restricting the liberties of the poor and weak. He doesn't, however, tell us what socialism has to do in a society which many people no longer see as ferociously unequal. As long as socialism cannot live in the present and define a modern perspective, people will not allow themselves to be directed by the reformist zeal of old-fashioned people. Gerald Ronson may be a villain for *New Statesman* readers, but when people are told that he invented the self-service petrol station, they will probably say: 'He seems to be the sort of chap we need.'

**David Graham**



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# BACKCHAT

## OUT TO LUNCH

### Disaster prone

**Andrew Lumsden**

MY CAREER has suffered another setback. Admiring friends are always proposing me for the *Guinness Book of Records* as the most unsuccessful modern journalist but, as I invariably point out, while Carol Thatcher lives the crown can't be mine.

What has happened is — but no, before I get to that I want to mention an abstruse problem in philosophy. It will be completely above the heads of all readers other than A. J. Ayer but I don't care. The only concession I'm prepared to make is, I won't use mathematical symbols.

Felix, who has just left for Tunisia with a man who rejuvenates on monkey-glands (do people *really* do that?), was driving me over Putney Bridge last weekend towards a party in Esher, when to distract me from my inner-city terror of the remote countryside he mentioned Auberon Waugh: 'Do you remember,' he said, 'when we were in a restaurant and Waugh was at the next table and I was telling you about the pig woman of Somerset, and he practically fell in two halves trying simultaneously to eavesdrop and to go on being polite to his dinner companion?'

'Ah!' I exclaimed excitedly, distracted just as he'd intended, 'Waugh, yes. Look — on Wednesdays I find Auberon Waugh in the *Guardian*'s young people's page, on Saturdays I find him in the *Independent*, on Sundays I find him in the beastly *Sunday Telegraph*. Sue sent me the *Literary Review* as a Christmas present. I find he edits that. When I open *Tatler* at the dentist's he's in that. I have a philosophical problem: if Auberon Waugh is in every periodical I pick up, does it logically follow — given that the above is a random sampling all across the liberal-centre-right spectrum — *that he must be in every single publication on earth with the exception of the* New Statesman?'

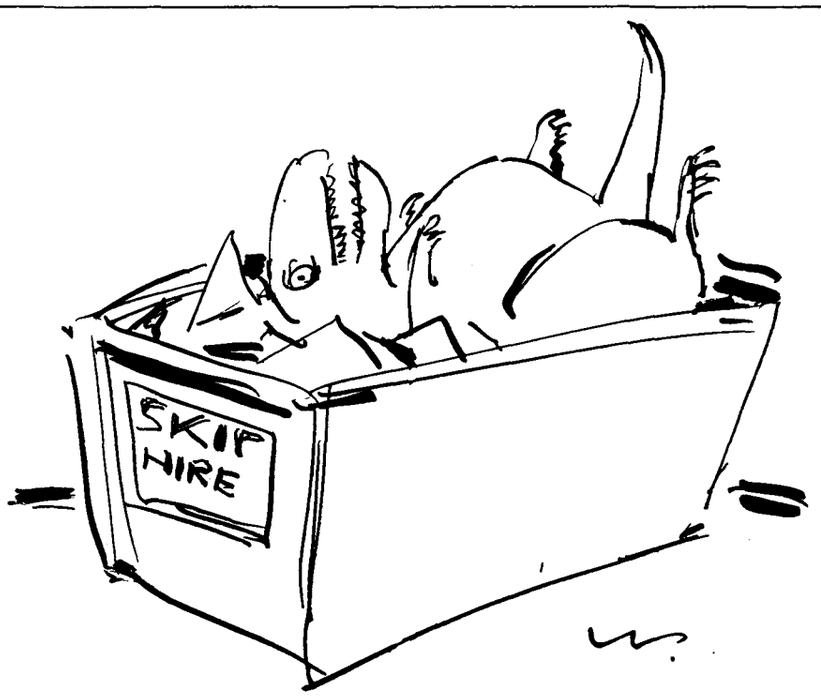
Felix, dexterously avoiding a giraffe or whatever such quadrupeds are, which a woman oddly dressed in a bowler hat was riding across green traffic lights (fancy their having traffic lights so far from London), pounced on further difficulties beyond those I'd noticed: 'If a publication is to be defined,' he said, 'as any printed object in which the name of Auberon Waugh appears, it's to be deduced that the *New Statesman* doesn't exist. Or, if it does exist, that it isn't a publication but something else.'

'Then, despite his apparent presence in that restaurant,' I went on doubtfully, 'surely he must really be a brand-name like Hoover? Not actually an individual?' But we'd arrived in Esher and near the house we were aiming for was a hideous green expanse from which some long-ago cataclysm had evidently removed all factories and other buildings. 'It's called a field,' explained Felix, helping me indoors.

I can't tell you the pig woman story, for which, as Dr Watson used to say of some of the Sherlock Holmes cases, the world is not yet prepared (the libel lawyers, at any rate, aren't). I was going to describe the latest boost to my candidacy as most unsuccessful journalist of the age.

I have this wonderful book in me, like all journalists. I'd put together the synopsis and draft chapters and I have an agent. Infamy and money were beckoning me on like the ghost of Jeffrey Archer. And then I got sent up so rotten, even before any publisher had had a chance to say no, that I've given up. Ronnie Corbett, calling himself Timothy Lumsden in the stupid so-called BBC1 comedy series *Sorry* (I should say so), enthused for a whole programme about how he was going to write a book: *The History of Ready-Mixed Concrete*. And Posy Simmonds, doing her *Guardian* cartoon strip, joined the attacks on me. Satirising publishers' parties she included a frame in which everyone's gazing at a broken individual: 'Tough on old Lumsden,' says the bubble, 'his last book being remaindered.'

I can take a hint. Has it occurred to anyone that if we still wrote in cuneiform on little clay tablets, novels would have to be taken round in wheelbarrows? That would slow the tide of publication and distribution. Not that anything could slow mine much more. □




## FIRST PERSON

### Don't forget Joe

**Gilbert Adair**

WITH WHAT ONE might term the 'ennoblers' of popular culture now in the ascendant (as against the high art vulgarisers, whose star has correspondingly waned), it is perhaps worth pausing a moment on an archetype that has become dispiritingly familiar to this country's (for want of a less culturally coded expression) intelligentsia: I refer to *Joe Bloggs*.

Who is Joe Bloggs? In the London telephone directory, volume A-D, not a single Bloggs is listed, as though conclusively to confirm the fact that his existence is of a mythological, not a statistical order. And if one were to seek to define his function, within the tightening parameters of a certain dominant ideology, Joe Bloggs could be called *he who must never be forgotten*. Increasingly, in virtually every sphere of intellectual activity, the ritualist invocation of his name has come to assume tyrannical proportions.

Thus, should one be writing a work of fiction, one is advised (by one's publisher, one's editor and especially by 'the marketing boys', who flaunt a distrust of, that borders on disgust with, the merest trace of formal, stylistic and even syntactical complexity) 'not to forget Joe Bloggs'. Populist filmmakers candidly admit to an Identikit perception of a 'typical spectator', which is a novel way of underestimating the public's intelligence. Bloggs' influence has been crucial in the standardising of modern British theatre and no one, assuredly, will need to be reminded of how much television is in thrall to him.

In fact, as is true of all mythic figures, his distinguishing traits — basically, anti-intellectualism; a suspicion of anyone or anything exceeding the limits of (pseudo-Johnsonian) common sense; a pathological fear of the challengingly new; and what Barthes, in reference to Poujade, described as his need 'to call obscurity his own blindness and verbal confusion his own deafness' — necessarily tell us more about the mentality of his creators and his champions than about that of some anonymous 'public' of which he is intended to serve as a Platonic projection. It is perfectly possible, then, that it is not on the Clapham omnibus that he is to be found, not in the pub in Streatham or the supermarket in Stirling,



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not at any of the codified addresses of stereotyped 'ordinariness', but inside the capital's publishing houses, advertising agencies, newspaper offices, TV and film studios.

Examples of Bloggs' stanglehold abound, and it is only space that prevents me citing more than three of them.

First, there is the apparently mandatory presence of a glamorised, streamlined Joe Bloggs proxy (an actor, a droll weather-forecaster or else a bluff, all-purpose pundit) on the Booker Prize jury, his unspecialised, no-nonsense attitude to literature 'humanising' an event whose high-falutin rarefaction would otherwise risk seeming a trifle too ethereal, too 'bookish' (a rigorously pejorative word in Bloggese), for somnolent postprandial television viewing. Such speciously anti-elitist demagoguery is, I suspect, a British cult: certainly, the prospect that an equivalent figure might one day be co-opted on to the Goncourt jury is unimaginable.

Second, the Royal Shakespeare Company's passion (in abeyance, just at present) for terminating a production, *any* production, be it of Kaufman and Hart's *Once in a Lifetime* or *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, with a jolly Billy Cotton-ish knees-up — with what used to be called, in music-hall parlance, a 'finale' — so that, no matter what may have been one's feeling about the performance as a whole, one unavoidably leaves the theatre in a state of induced euphoria.

Last, and maybe the apotheosis of the phenomenon, is Alan Parker's television film *A Turnip Head's Guide to Cinema*. That title itself is, in the French expression, *tout un programme*; and it might have been possible to interpret the decision of the usually serious and admirable Kevin Brownlow and David Gill to indulge the director of *Midnight Express* in his combatively philistine prejudices (against the critics, the BFI, *The Draughtsman's Contract*, etc.) as a case of giving him the rope to hang himself with, had not the film been subsequently nominated — by Parker's 'peers' — for a BAFTA award.

Were these the aberrations of a system that in the main functioned fairly smoothly, one would dismiss them, even be diverted by them. They are, though, not exceptions to, but strict applications of a principle on which our culture, high and low, is currently founded — which is that in the country of the blind *everyone's a Tiresias*. Ignorance, it would appear, is henceforth a qualification.

*Postscript*: I was recently invited by a BBC TV arts programme to hold forth on a subject about which I happen to have written a book (Hollywood's handling of the Vietnam War). When I queried the insultingly low fee I was informed that, being an 'expert' — which is to say, someone who need not spend the time on research that an ignoramus would presumably require — I was therefore to be paid on the 'lower' scale. □

*Gilbert Adair's recent collection of essays* Myths and Memoirs *is published by Collins/Flamingo.*

**FOOD**

# Quick lime

**Suzy Benghiat**

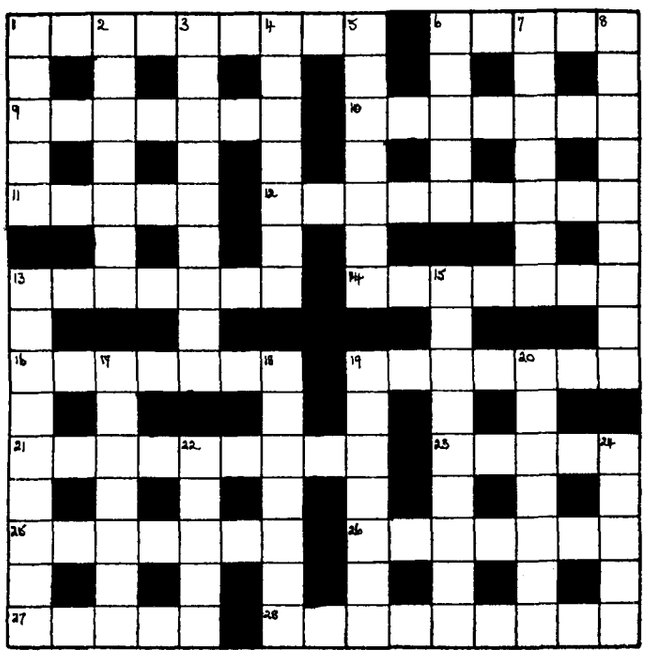
READERS OF this column must have guessed my fondness for lemons and, more particularly, limes. This article, the last of the series, is entirely devoted to this most delicious and versatile of citrus, in its various guises: fresh or dried, pickled or cooked.

Try fresh lime juice in your dressing instead of vinegar for salads, hot or cold. A few drops will transform a simple fresh fruit salad. Or take a tip from North Africa, using preserved lemons, or from Iraq, using dried limes to enrich your stews.

I discovered dried limes a few years ago in London through a French friend, married to an Iraqi and living in Kuwait! It was a revelation, which I did not expect from the look of these blackened, dried-up little things. They make delicious teas; included whole in a stew, they soon absorb enough liquid to be reconstituted into a plump fruit, tender enough to be cut with a fork and imparting an exquisitely sharp flavour to transform the dullest of stews. Ground to a powder, try sprinkling it onto any dish you feel will benefit from a tangy flavour. These dried limes can now be found, sold in small plastic bags, in various ethnic shops. I understand they come

# Weekend Crossword 1554

**£3 Book Tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1554, New Statesman, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8BA, by first post 4 May.**



Name_____

Address_____

**ACROSS**

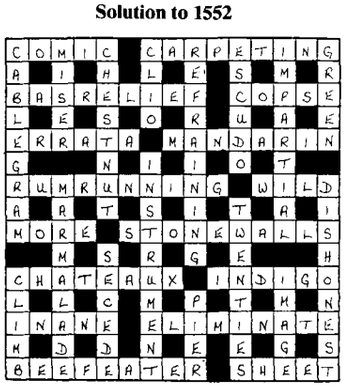
1. Hurry and get on part of car (9)
6. Man who leaves part of play unfinished in work (5)
9. Defame the making of a copper when back in business (7)
10. Include what is not made obscure in a Biblical character (7)
11. Place which makes a thousand at auction (5)
12. Half live in a big room thrown into confusion (9)
13. Old lady discovers the wit in an actor (7)
14. Untidy clerks keep nothing in boxes (7)
16. Being in charge they go right in among the enemy (7)
19. Duties show fruitful things about a relationship (7)
21. Turning clean with the best and becoming white (9)
23. Prey found in mountains where there are no cats (5)
25. Hostility from a sick man (7)
26. Carried in triumph, bringing anger into the place (7)
27. It is crooked so man makes a complaint (5)
28. The town would be flat if there were no theatre (9)

**DOWN**

1. Before these appointments man makes orders (5)
2. Everything in the performance is superficial (7)
3. City has to search inside a museum (9)
4. Workshop that is later rebuilt (7)
5. Sound measure (7)
6. Bellicose person sounds as if he makes the drink disappear (5)
7. Man who makes a false statement to a daily (7)
8. Prohibit wooden supporters for players (9)
13. Hopelessness of philosophical belief without achievement (9)
15. To stop one's spouse constitutes a victory (9)
17. A girl follows sport — it's a disease! (7)
18. Used by housewife so not quite superfluous (7)
19. Vessel in which writer carries a little one (7)
20. Where the healthy are put up with the sick on top (7)
22. After a second drinks are things which go to the head (5)
24. Don't make direct progress, having a beginner in the team (5)

SETSQUARE

**Solution to 1552**



**Prizewinners to 1552**

M. J. Nolan (Tonbridge, Kent)
J. Stark (Edinburgh)
Sara Spain (London, SE3)



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from Pakistan. If you are patient enough, and have a dry, warm spot in the house, just leave limes in a basket or an open bowl and forget about them for years. This is just how I discovered it could be done! So, if you find some lemons or limes you are ready to throw away because they have gone hard, don't.

Preserved lemons are quite easy to prepare: you just cut them in quarters, but leaving them attached at the bottom, and fill them with salt. You then pack them in a clean preserving jar, sprinkling each layer with salt. Squeeze the lot hard and fill with a mixture of lemon juice and water. Close hermetically, making sure that every piece is submerged. It takes at least two weeks in a warm dark place. If you are not the type to embark on this kind of preparation, all is not lost as I have found the best pickled limes in jars imported from Egypt.

A Moroccan cook taught me how to cook fresh lemons into a stew with very happy results. I here offer you my latest improvisation. Cut up your fruit (lemons *or* limes) into wedges, which you halve and place in a saucepan where they will fit tightly in one layer with enough olive oil just to line the bottom of the pan. Add a whole clove of garlic and salt and barely cover with water, bring to the boil, lower heat, cover and simmer. When ready, the lime should be soft enough to cut with a fork and the liquid thick and sirrupy. You can either use it immediately, or keep it in the refrigerator for a few days. I always make enough to freeze in the ice tray.

**Potato and fennel salad**

Warm new potatoes in their jackets, mixed with raw, crisp fennel bulbs cut into wedges, chopped spring onions and a few pieces of preserved lime, tossed with good olive oil; this is always a great success with my guests.

**Moroccan tagine with broad beans, peas and endives**

Endives are definitely not Middle-Eastern vegetables — but the combination is delicious. However, if you want to feel more authentic, you could use artichoke hearts instead.

For four portions, chop one large onion very finely, and place in a heavy-based saucepan lined with a thin coating of olive oil. Add one sliced lemon, turn heat on to medium, sprinkle in salt, cover and simmer while you prepare the meat and vegetables. Remove skin and extra fat from 3 to 4lbs of lamb cut into chunks (with some bones). Shell the peas and broad beans, wash and cut up the endives into thick slices. When the onion in the pan is transparent and starts to take colour, add the meat, turn the heat up and brown. Cover with water, scraping the bottom of the pan, add pepper, one tsp. each of ground ginger and ground cumin and some allspice if you have any. Bring to the boil, lower heat and simmer until the meat is nearly done. Add the vegetables, mix well and simmer. Serve with pilaf rice, burghul, couscous or just good crusty bread.

**Easy brick**

*Brick* is a Tunisian speciality, a version of the Turkish *borek* which you find all over what used to be the Ottoman Empire. It looks like a giant samosa — a semi-circular shape filled with all kinds of mixtures. It is usually made with a kind of filo pastry and deep fried. My version is easier to prepare and much lighter as I prefer to bake it.

I don't think one can get real *brick* pastry in Britain, but I do find the Chinese eggroll squares most appropriate. Take one piece at a time, and spread it lightly but all over with oil. Place the filling on one corner, roll lightly, tucking the sides in to make a loose roll (hot-dog size). Place on an oiled tin and bake in a medium/hot oven for about 20 minutes or until golden.

Here is a nice easy filling for four large portions: 1 tin tuna fish, 4oz grated cheese (cheddar is fine), blended together with a fork, 1 tbs of crushed dried lime (or, of course, some cut-up preserved lemon) and two eggs. Beat the whole mixture thoroughly. □

# Weekend competition

**No 2971** **Set by Margaret Rogers**

'People who live in glass houses should install double glazing.' Could we have similar updates of proverbs for use as ads or as propaganda? Max. six per entrant by 29 April.

**No 2968** **Set by Gray Dorn**

Odes on a Condom.

**Report** **By Rosie Hughes**

*Can't* you be clever and keen when you want to. It's a teeny bit sad that it needed *willies* to provoke you to such prolificness and brilliance, but, really, you do all deserve a big kiss. There's a Special Mention to Roderick Clayton for his title 'Ode on a Secretion Yearn', ten pounds each to the winners below and, as promised, an additional prize of Jeanette Parisot's *Johnny Come Lately: A Short History of the Condom* (published by Journeyman at £4.95) to Watson Weeks, Tom Donnelly and Peter Norman.

O prophylactic aid to fruitiness,
Close-fitting friend of Cupid's swelling shaft,
Conspiring with it how t'off-load sans stress
The milky oozings of its am'rous craft;
Oft times whoever ruts abroad may find
Thee nestling snugly in some wallet's fold;
And then the jolly satyr lewdly gloats
In mad pursuit of merry damsels bold;
For though to tender passions th'art not kind,
And in the moment's heat a perfect bind,
Thou safes the sowing of a young swain's oats.

WATSON WEEKS

*Address to a Condom*

Within my pouch ye share the space
Wi' credit cairds, but tak your place
Abune them a', wee pudding-case
O' stout cahoutchy —
More à la mode a knob to grace
Than any Gucci!

My wullie I'm o'er-inclined to dunk,
Stravaiging roun', dispersing spunk —
I canna play the halie monk
Wi' ilka charmer!
And so my plonker aye will plunk
Weel-clad in armour!

TOM DONNELLY

*The Frenchletter* by G. M. Hopkins

I wore this morning, scorning conscience, thee! Pope-
Proscribed prophylactic, sausageskin-thin
Thing, liberally lubricated, rolled up in
Gold foil. Fool's gold! Yet why mourn or mope
The humble pin-prick, nick that foiled the folly
Of this ungrateful scape-grace, deep steeped in sin?
Rather give thanks to the Wise Wielder of that pin
That made thee, once thou wert holey, wholly holy.

PETER NORMAN

*To the Condom*

Though once the source of lewd asides,
Embarrassment and rocky rides,
The subject of abuse,
This slip of rubber now divides
The spheres of heaven and hell, and guides
Are broadcast for its use.

No longer hidden, now we see
The Condom's vast variety
(Both elegant and witty),
Enhancing sex security,
And never in all history
Have lovers come so pretty.

KELTIE LAMMATT

*Ode to a condom, after Keats*

My arse aches and a drowsy numbness fills
My sense. But tho' Love's philtre I have drunk
In many a beakerful, yet I shall have no ills.
For thou, light-winged gossamer, hath sunk
Our fears beneath thy tactile carapace.
No more shall youth grow spectre-thin and die!
Nor true love fear upon the morrow.
But where's Love's free embrace?
Thou rubber sheath we put on with a sigh,
We wrap our safety up, and pay with sorrow.

KAY BLEERY

Sealer of all o'er-mellow fruitfulness!
Close-bosom comrade of the pocket's fluff,
From which, once detached, thou dost provide a dress
So feather-light, it would not seem enough
To hold the bounty of o'er-brimming lust
And keep apart, with insubstantial power,
Those heated agents of the heart's desire,
And check the sowing of a nightmare's flower.
Love's most exotic attribute is trust —
But who dares that roulette? Come, let's adjust
Your silken presence, and contain the fire.

ALISON PRINCE

O sleek smooth sheath, thou gossamer protection
Thou, whose enclosing latex guards the lewd
Against the perils of the wild erection,

Neutral, and black, and pink, and many-hued,
Bedecked with ribbed bulbs as the famed French
Tickler,
To use thee is magnanimous and shrewd,

For every swain now needs must be a stickler;
Denying all, or holding fast to one,
Or ne'er neglecting thee should he be fickler.

For woe to those who, rash or heedless, shun
The gentle pressure of thy taut elastic
And pay in pain and penance for their fun.

BASIL RANSOME-DAVIES



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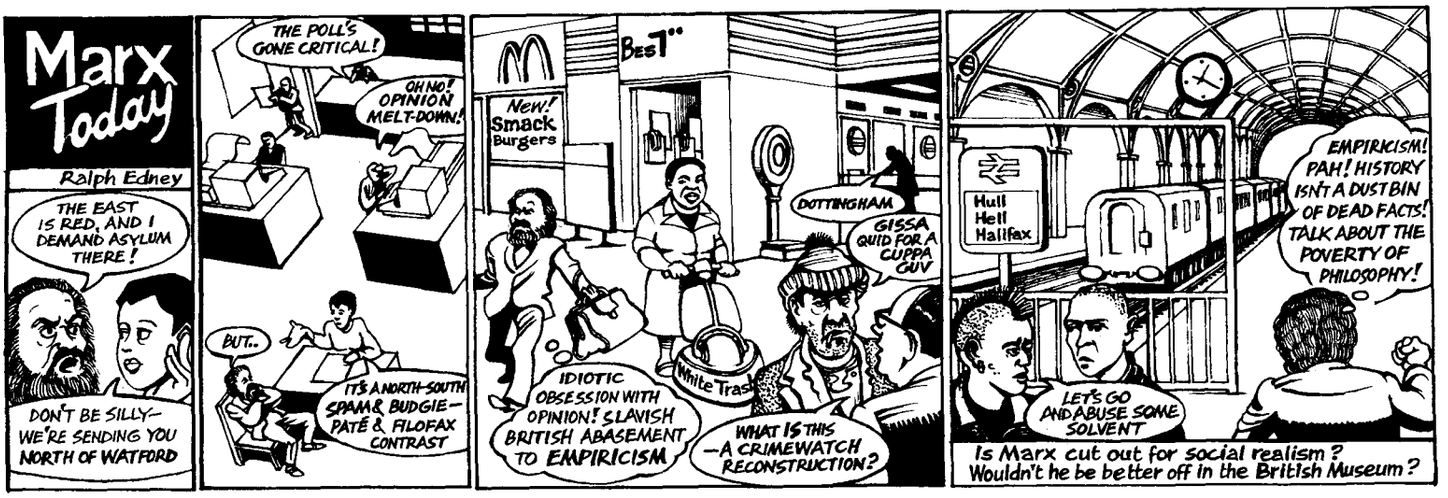

Marx Today
Ralph Edney
THE EAST IS RED, AND I DEMAND ASYLUM THERE!
DON'T BE SILLY— WE'RE SENDING YOU NORTH OF WATFORD
THE POLL'S GONE CRITICAL!
OH NO! OPINION MELT-DOWN!
BUT..
IT'S A NORTH-SOUTH SPAM & BUDGIE— PATÉ & FILOFAX CONTRAST
BEST
New! Smack Burgers
DOTTINGHAM
GISSA QUID FOR A CUPPA GUV
White Trash
IDIOTIC OBSESSION WITH OPINION! SLAVISH BRITISH ABASEMENT TO EMPIRICISM
WHAT IS THIS —A CRIMEWATCH RECONSTRUCTION?
Hull Hell Halifax
EMPIRICISM! PAH! HISTORY ISN'T A DUSTBIN OF DEAD FACTS! TALK ABOUT THE POVERTY OF PHILOSOPHY!
LET'S GO AND ABUSE SOME SOLVENT
Is Marx cut out for social realism? Wouldn't he be better off in the British Museum?

# Chess

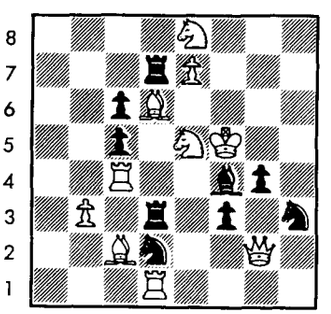
AS FAR AS the chess was concerned — I mean, ignoring all the hype and doing our best to forget the ghastly sight of our Nigel from Bolton in a dinner jacket — the Kasparov v Short Speed Challenge on Channel 4 was a good deal better than could have been expected. With only 20 minutes on the clock for all the moves, how could one expect anything more than light entertainment, or even a comedy of errors? But it really did not seem to make much difference that they had minutes rather than hours. The games bubbled with ideas and all six of them were decisive. Kasparov deserved to win the match, and Short proved that he could test the champion. For those who missed any of the games, or want annotations that dig a little deeper than the TV commentary could, after the programmes comes the book of the match — Raymond Keene's *Speed Chess Challenge: Kasparov v Short 1987*, published by Batsford at £7.50 'in association with Thames Television and Channel Four'. That probably means it will be easier to get hold of than most chess books.

To turn from the latest format to an established tradition, I pose you the query: Which event, first played in 1873, is the world's longest-running annual chess fixture? The answer to this piece of trivia can easily be inferred from the information that the latest match in the series, played at the Royal Automobile Club on 14 March, was won 5-3 by Oxford. Since the 1960s varsity chess matches have produced improbable streaks of success and failure. Their latest defeat makes it seven lean years in a row for Cambridge. Before that came an even more monotonous spell of 11 consecutive years of defeat for Oxford, enough to give anyone the darkest blues. Here is the second board game from this year's match:

**Lawson (Cambridge)-Howell (Oxford), King's Gambit.**
**1. e4 e5 2. f4 d5 3. exd5 c6** To refute the King's Gambit you should take the pawn. For practical purposes there are a number of ways of declining that reduce the danger that Black will succumb to an early attack. This is one of them, introduced by Nimzowitsch in order to frustrate Spielmann's aggressive ambitions in their 1907 match. **4. Nc3 exf4 5. Nf3 Bd6 6. d4 Ne7 7. Bd3** White is determined to persist with a gambit. However, now that the f4 pawn is firmly supported it is inevitable that the chances on the K-side will be Black's. White should play 7. dxc6 and try to make use of his central pawns. **cxd5 8. Nb5 Nbc6 9. Nxd6+ Qxd6 10. c3 f6 11. 0-0 Be6 12. b4 g5 13. a4 Qd7 14. b5 Na5 15. Ba3?** It was vital to prevent Black from castling Q-side in safety. Therefore the right move was 15. Re1!, to meet 15 . . . 0-0-0 with 16. Qe2. **0-0-0 16. Re1 Rhe8 17. Qb1 Nc4 18. Bxc4 dxc4 19. Nd2 Bd5 20. Qxh7 Nf5!** One might have expected Black to try and score mate on g2 with Q + B. But Howell realises that it is more efficient to rely on the golden rule of exchanges: get rid of your opponent's healthy pieces and leave him to nurse the inactive ones — such as White's Bishop on a3. **21. Qxd7+ Kxd7 22. Nf1 Nh4 23. Rxe8 Rxe8 24. Ra2 f5 25. g3 Nf3+ 26. Kf2 Ne1 27. Kg1 f3 28. h3 Nd3 0-1.** No defence against the threats of . . . Re2 or . . . Re1 and . . . f2+. Of course 28 . . . Re2, winning a piece, was also good enough.

In most years nothing much apart from the weight of tradition hangs on this match, even though the Oxford and Cambridge University teams are invariably among the strongest club sides in the country. This year, however, Oxford, as winners of the varsity match, have been challenged by the 1986 Pan American champions, Chicago University.

The challenge that I invite readers to take up is provided by a problem which is the first stage in the Lloyds Bank British Problem Solving Championship, a competition that is open to everybody and which attracts more than 2,000 entries each year. In the diagram White is to play and mate in two moves against any defence. To enter, send the solution (just White's first move) to **Lloyds Bank Sponsorship, Princess House, 152-156 Upper Thames Street, London EC4,** marking your entry '*New Statesman*'. Everyone who solves the problem correctly will qualify for harder postal tests, culminating in the grand finals in London in January 1988. The eventual winner will receive £100 and an invitation to represent Britain in the 1988 world solving championship. There is also a special overseas section (£50 to the winner), which will be conducted entirely by post.




**George Botterill**

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# This England

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☐ The latest fashion appears to be prison-made shirts which can sell for up to £25 each. They are wanted so much by the fashion-conscious that two men staged a raid on Sudbury prison, Derbyshire, to steal six striped shirts. — *The Times* (F. J. G. Ebling)

☐ Sir Ian drummed home a sound reply to the charge that the hanging statistics do not visibly deter murders. 'Of course they don't. The crime statistics show only who has not been deterred. They don't include who has been.' — *Daily Telegraph* (P. H. Holway)

☐ Natural History Society speaker at Castle Park School on Monday was Mr John Hughes of Cheshire, chairman of the Biological Association, and adviser to three county authorities. He was brought up in a remote farm in North Wales, and under the title Food for Free he described with slides how he earned enough to see himself through university by living on his wits, particularly by poaching. As he is a judo black belt and was a champion sprinter, he was never caught by the gamekeepers. — *Westmorland Gazette* (Paul Lashmar)

☐ Characters in Mills and Boon novels are to show less passion and more romance, because of Aids. A spokesman said: 'We're reflecting a change in real-life dating.' — *Sunday Mirror* (Amanda Welles)



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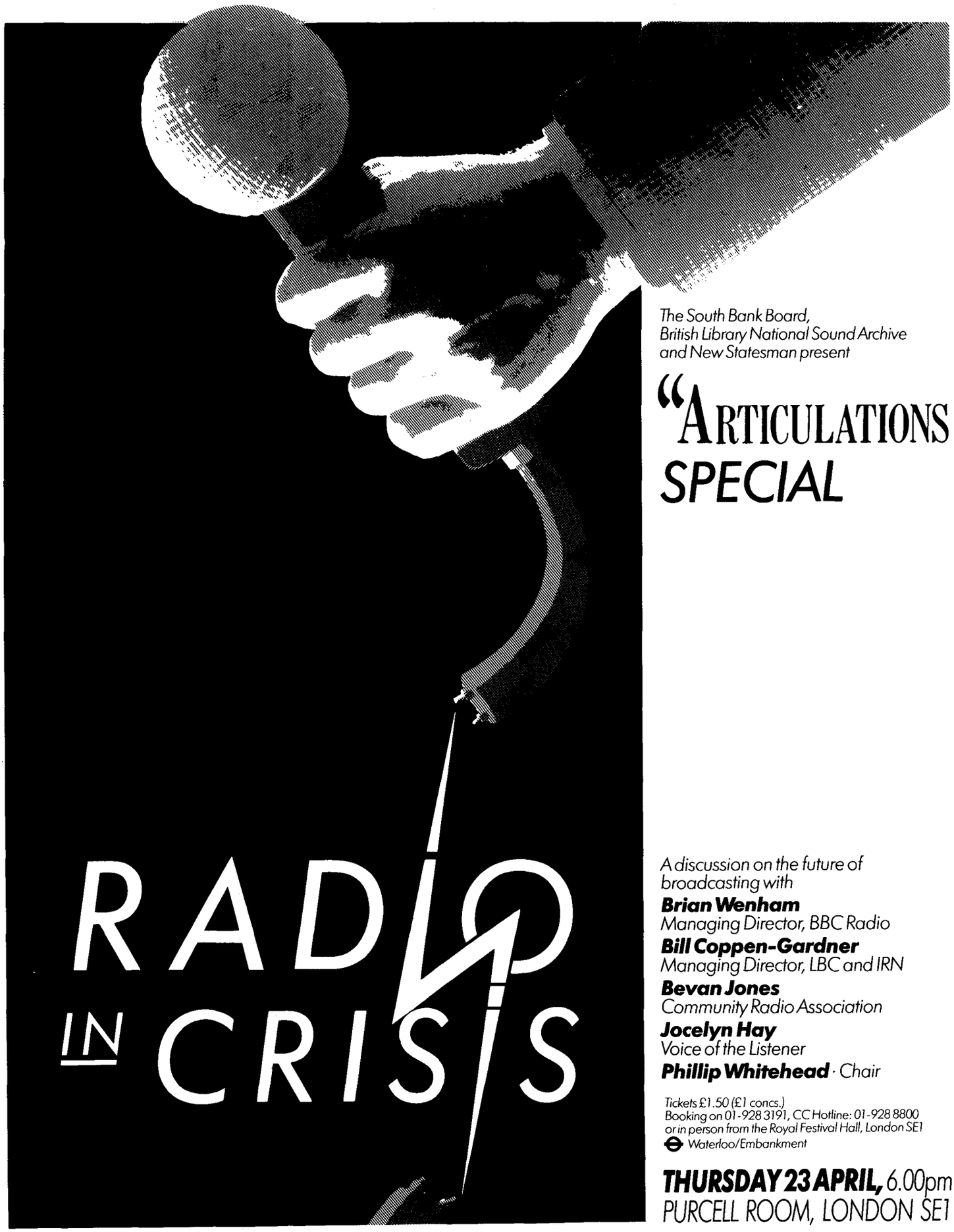


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